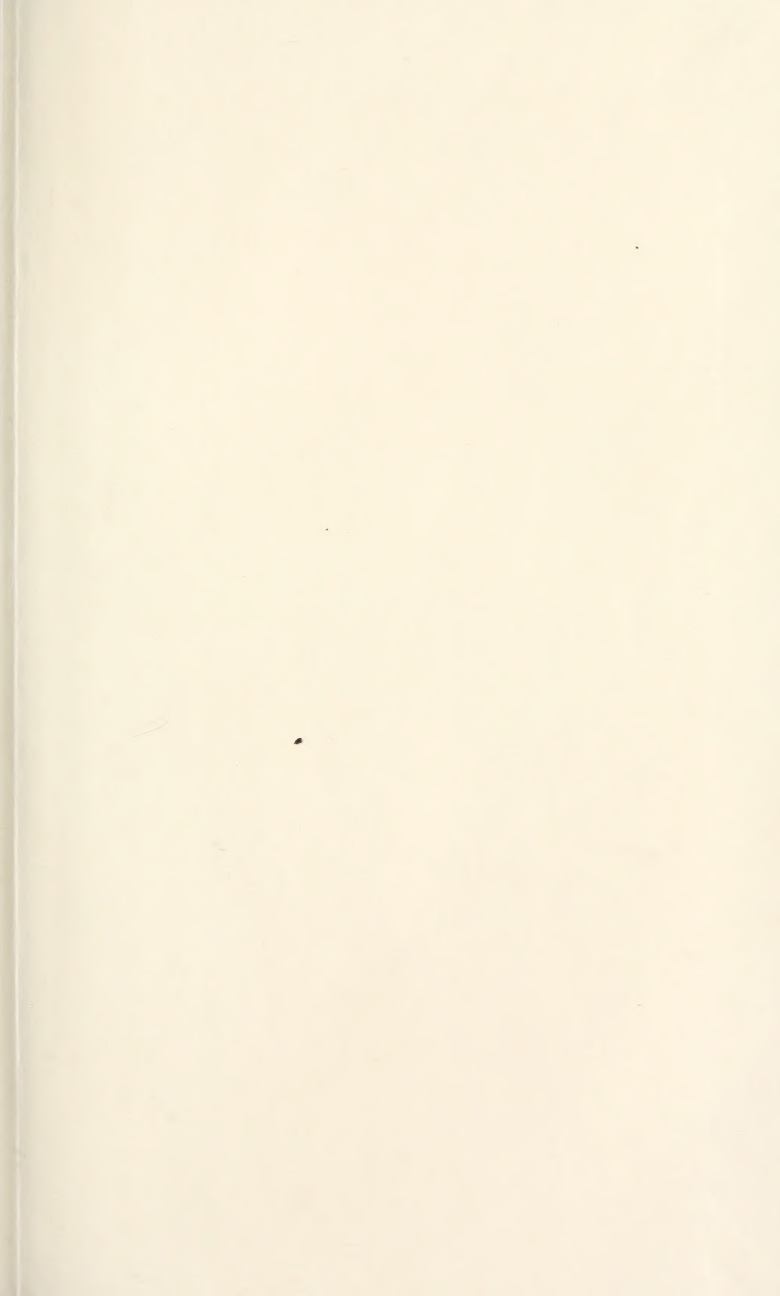
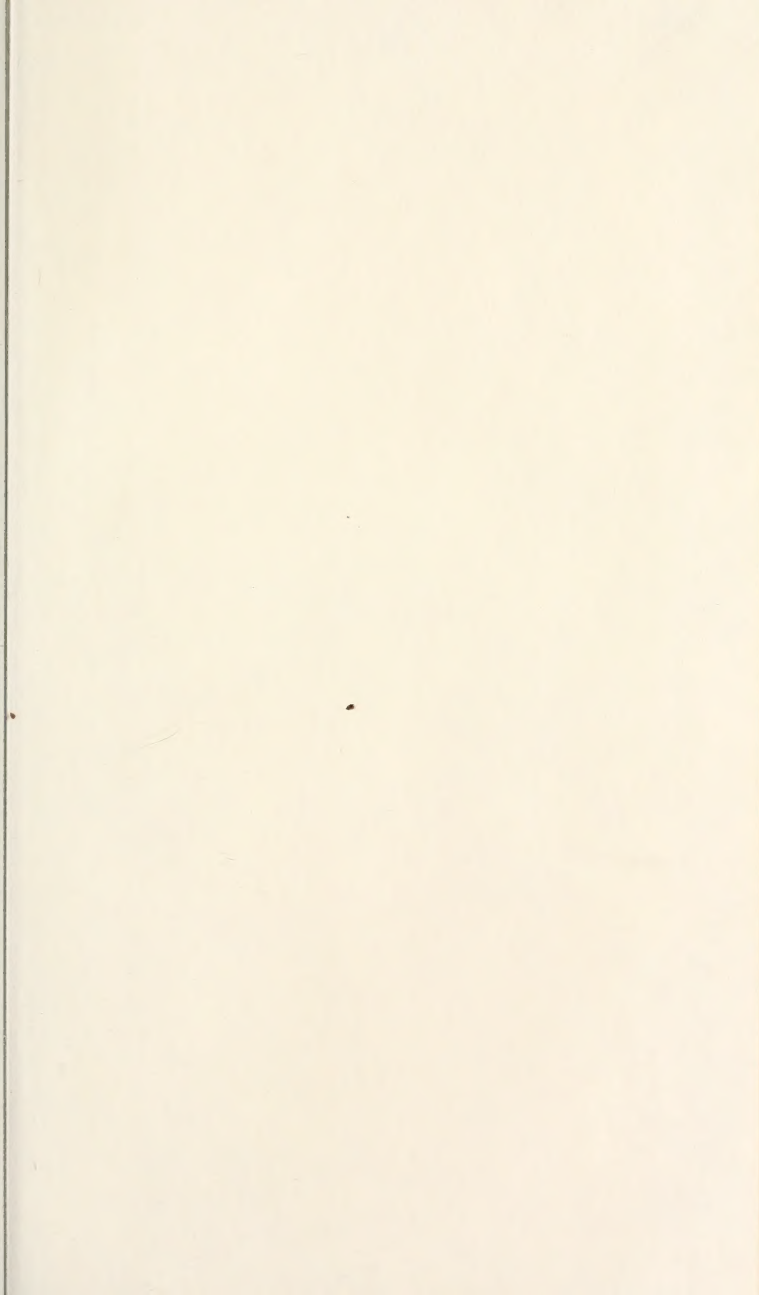




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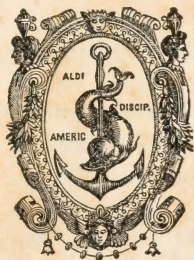
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PAROCHIAL SERMONS.

BY

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, B.D.

VICAR OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN'S, OXFORD, AND FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE.



SIX VOLUMES, LONDON EDITION,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

D. APPLETON AND CO., 200, BROADWAY.

PHILADELPHIA:

GEORGE S. APPLETON, 148, CHESTNUT-STREET.

M DCCC XLIII.

324297
10. 2. 36.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE



1875

H. LUDWIG, PRINTER,
72 Nassau-st. N. Y.

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PAROCHIAL SERMONS.

VOL. I.

OF THE LONDON EDITION.

SERMONS, &c.

SERMON I.

HOLINESS NECESSARY FOR FUTURE BLESSEDNESS.

HEBREWS xii. 14.

“Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

IN this text it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit to convey a chief truth of religion in a few words. It is this circumstance which makes it especially impressive: for the truth itself is declared in one form or other in every part of Scripture. It is told us again and again, that to make sinful creatures *holy* was the great end which our Lord had in view in taking upon Him our nature, and thus none but the holy will be accepted for His *sake* at the last day. The whole history of redemption, the covenant of mercy in all its parts and provisions, attest the necessity of holiness in order to salvation; as indeed even our natural conscience bears witness also. But in the text what is elsewhere implied in history, and enjoined by precept, is stated doctrinally, as a momentous and necessary fact, the result of some awful irreversible law in the nature of things, and the inscrutable determination of the Divine Will.

Now some one may ask, “Why is it that holiness is a necessary qualification for our being received into heaven? why is it that the Bible enjoins upon us so strictly to love, fear, and obey God, to be just, honest, meek, pure in heart, forgiving, heavenly-minded, self-denying, humble, and resigned? Man is confessedly weak and corrupt; *why* then is he enjoined to be so religious, so unearthly? *why* is he required (in the strong language of Scripture) to become “a new creature? Since he

is by nature what he is, would it not be an act of greater mercy in God to save him altogether without this holiness, which it is so difficult, yet (as it appears) so necessary for him to possess?"

Now we have no right to ask this question. Surely it is quite enough for a sinner to know, that a way has been opened through God's grace for his salvation, without being informed why that way, and not another way was chosen by Divine Wisdom. Eternal life is "the *gift* of God." Undoubtedly He may prescribe the terms on which He will give it; and if He has determined holiness to be the way of life, it is enough; it is not for us to inquire why He has so determined.

Yet the question may be asked reverently, and with a view to enlarge our insight into our own condition and prospects; and in that case the attempt to answer it will be profitable, if it be made soberly. I proceed, therefore, to state one of the reasons assigned in Scripture, why present holiness is necessary, as the text declares to us, for future happiness.

To be holy is, in our Church's words, to have "the true circumcision of the Spirit;" that is, to be separate from sin, to hate the works of the world, the flesh, and the devil; to take pleasure in keeping God's commandments; to do things as He would have us do them; to live habitually as in the sight of the world to come, as if we had broken the ties of this life, and were dead already. Why cannot we be saved without possessing such a frame and temper of mind?

I answer as follows: That, even supposing a man of unholy life were suffered to enter Heaven, *he would not be happy there*; so that it would be no mercy to permit him to enter.

We are apt to deceive ourselves, and to consider Heaven a place like this earth; I mean, a place where every one may choose and take his *own* pleasure. We see that in this world, active men have their own enjoyments, and domestic men have theirs; men of literature, of science, of political talent, have their respective pursuits and pleasures. Hence we are led to act as if it will be the same in another world. The only difference we put between this world and the next, is that *here* (as we know well), men are *no' always sure*, but *there*, we suppose they *will be always sure*, of obtaining what they seek after. And accordingly we conclude, that *any man*, whatever his habits, tastes, or manner of life, if *once admitted* into Heaven, would be happy there. Not that we altogether deny, that some preparation is necessary for the next world; but we do not estimate its real extent and importance. We think we can reconcile ourselves to God when we will; as if nothing were required in the case of men in general, but some temporary attention, more than ordinary, to our religious duties.—some strictness, during our last sickness, to the services of the Church, as men of business arrange their

letters and papers on taking a journey or balancing an account. But an opinion like this, though commonly acted on, is refuted as soon as put into words. For Heaven, it is plain from Scripture, is not a place where many different and discordant pursuits can be carried on at once, as is the case in this world. Here every man can do his *own* pleasure, but there he must do *God's* pleasure. It would be presumption to attempt to determine the employments of that eternal life which good men are to pass in God's presence, or to deny that that state which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived, may comprise an infinite variety of pursuits and occupations. Still so far we are distinctly told, that that future life will be spent in God's *presence*, in a sense which does not apply to our present life; so that it may be best described as an endless and uninterrupted worship of the Eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. "They serve him day and night in His temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." Again, "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."* These passages from St. John are sufficient to remind us of many others.

Heaven, then, is not like this world; I will say what it is much more like,—*a church*. For in a place of public worship no language of this world is heard; there are no schemes brought forward for temporal objects, great or small; no information how to strengthen our worldly interests, extend our influence, or establish our credit. These things indeed may be right in their way, so that we do not set our hearts upon them; still, (I repeat,) it is certain that we hear nothing of them in a church. Here we hear solely and entirely of *God*. We praise Him, worship Him, sing to Him, thank Him, confess to Him, give ourselves up to Him, and ask His blessing. And *therefore*, a church is like Heaven; viz., because both in the one and the other, there is one single sovereign subject—religion—brought before us.

Supposing, then, instead of it being said that no irreligious man could serve and love God in Heaven, (or see Him, as the text expresses it,) we were told that no irreligious man could worship, or spiritually see Him in church; should we not at once perceive the meaning of the doctrine? viz. that, were a man to come hither, who had suffered his mind to grow up in its own way, as nature or chance determined, without any

* Rev. vii. 15, 17; xxi. 23, 24.

deliberate habitual effort after truth and purity, he would find no real pleasure here, but would soon get weary of the place ; because, in this house of God, he would hear only of that one subject which he cared little or nothing about, and nothing at all of those things which excited his hopes and fears, his sympathies and energies. If, then, a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into Heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there ; but when he arrived there, he would find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth, no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised, nothing which bound him to aught *else* in the universe, and made him feel at home, nothing which he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an isolated being, cut away by Supreme Power from those objects which were still entwined around his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power, whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded only as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah ! he could not *bear* the face of the Living God ; the Holy God would be no object of joy to him. “ Let us alone ! What have we to do with thee ? ” is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His majesty. None but the holy can look upon the Holy One ; without holiness no man can endure to see the Lord.

When, then, we think to take part in the joys of heaven without holiness, we are as inconsiderate as if we supposed we could take an interest in the worship of Christians here below without possessing it in our measure. A careless, a sensual, an unbelieving mind, a mind destitute of the love and fear of God, with narrow views and earthly aims, a low standard of duty, and a benighted conscience, a mind contented with itself, and unresigned to God’s will, would not feel pleasure, at the last day, at the words, “ Enter into the joy of thy Lord,” more than it does now at the words, “ Let us pray.” Nay, much less, because, while we are in a church, we may turn our thoughts to other subjects, and contrive to forget that God is looking on us ; but that will not be possible in Heaven.

We see, then, that holiness, or inward separation from the world, is necessary to our admission into Heaven, because Heaven is *not* Heaven, is not a place of happiness *except* to the holy. There are bodily indispositions which affect the taste, so that the sweetest flavours become ungrateful to the palate ; and indispositions which impair the sight, tinging the fair face of nature with some sickly hue. In like manner, there is a moral malady which disorders the inward sight and taste ; and no man labouring under it is in a condition to enjoy what Scripture

calls "the fulness of joy in God's presence, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore."

Nay, I will venture to say more than this ;—it is fearful, but it is right to say it ;—that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to *summon it to Heaven*. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man. We know how unhappy we are apt to feel at present, when alone in the midst of strangers, or of men of different tastes and habits from ourselves. How miserable, for example, would it be to have to live in a foreign land, among a people whose faces we never saw before, and whose language we could not learn. And this is but a faint illustration of the loneliness of a man of earthly dispositions and tastes, thrust into the society of saints and angels. How forlorn would he wander through the courts of Heaven ; He would find no one like himself ; he would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would feel himself always in his presence. He could no longer turn his thoughts another way, as he does now, when conscience reproaches him. He would know that the Eternal Eye was ever upon him ; and that Eye of holiness, which is joy and life to holy creatures, would seem to him an eye of wrath and punishment. God cannot change his nature. Holy He must ever be. But while he is holy, no unholy soul can be happy in Heaven. Fire does not inflame iron, but it inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so Heaven itself would be fire to those, who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of Hell. The finger of Lazarus would but increase their thirst. The very "Heaven that is over their head," will be "brass" to them.

And now I have partly explained why it is that holiness is prescribed to us as the condition on our part for our admission into Heaven. It seems to be necessary from the very nature of things. We do not see how it could be otherwise.—Now then I will mention two important truths which seem to follow from what has been said.

1. If a certain character of mind, a certain state of the heart and affections, be necessary for entering Heaven, our *actions* will avail for our salvation, chiefly as they tend to produce or evidence this frame of mind. Good works (as they are called) are required, not as if they had any thing of merit in them, not as if they could of themselves turn away God's anger for our sins, or purchase Heaven for us, but because they are the means, under God's grace, of strengthening and showing forth that holy principle which God implants in the heart, and without which, (as the text tells us,) we cannot see Him. The more numerous are our acts of charity, self-denial, and forbearance, of course the more will our minds

be schooled into a charitable, self-denying, and forbearing temper. The more frequent are our prayers, the more humble, patient, and religious are our daily deeds, this communion with God, these holy works, will be the means of making our hearts holy, and of preparing us for the future presence of God. Outward acts, done on principle, create inward habits. I repeat, the separate acts of obedience to the will of God, good works as they are called, are of service to us, as gradually severing us from this world of sense, and impressing our hearts with a heavenly character.

It is plain, then, what works are *not* of service to our salvation;—all those which either have no effect upon the heart to change it, or which have a bad effect. What then must be said of those who think it an easy thing to please God, and to recommend themselves to Him; who do a few scanty services, call these the walk of faith, and are satisfied with them? Such men, it is too evident, instead of being themselves profited by their acts, such as they are, of benevolence, honesty, or justice, may be (I might even say) injured by them. For these very acts, even though good in themselves, are made to foster in these persons a bad spirit, a corrupt state of heart, viz. self-love, self-conceit, self-reliance, instead of tending to turn them from this world to the Father of spirits. In like manner the mere outward acts of coming to church, and saying prayers, which are, of course, duties imperative upon all of us, are really serviceable to those only who do them in a heavenward spirit. Because such men only use these good deeds to the improvement of the heart; whereas even the most exact outward devotion avails not a man, if it does not improve it.

2. But observe what follows from this. If holiness be not merely the doing a certain number of good actions, but is an inward character which follows, under God's grace, from doing them, how far distant from that holiness are the multitude of men. They are not yet even obedient in outward deeds, which is the first step towards possessing it. They have even to learn to practise good works, as the means of changing their hearts, which is the end. It follows at once, even though Scripture did not plainly tell us so, that no one is able to prepare himself for heaven, that is, make himself holy, in a short time;—at least we do not see how it is possible; and this, viewed merely as a deduction of the reason, is a serious thought. Yet, alas! as there are persons who think to be saved by a few scanty performances, so there are others who suppose they may be saved all at once by a sudden and easily acquired faith. Most men who are living in neglect of God, silence their consciences, when troublesome, with the promise of repenting some future day. How often are they thus led on till death

surprises them! But we will suppose they *do* begin to repent when that future day comes. Nay, we will even suppose that Almighty God were to forgive them, and to admit them in His holy heaven. Well, but is nothing more requisite? are they in a fit state to *do Him service in heaven*? is not this the very point I have been so insisting on, that they are *not* in a fit state? has it not been shown that, even if admitted there without a change of heart, they would find no pleasure in heaven? and is a change of heart wrought in a day? Which of our tastes or likings can we change at our will in a moment? Not the most superficial. Can we then at a word change the whole frame and character of our minds? Is not holiness the result of many patient, repeated efforts after obedience, gradually working on us, and first modifying and then changing our hearts? We dare not, of course, set bounds, to God's mercy and power in cases of repentance late in life, even where He has revealed to us the general rule of His moral governance; yet, surely it is our duty ever to keep steadily before us, and act upon, those general truths which His Holy Word has declared. His Holy Word in various ways warns us, that, as no one will find happiness in heaven, who is not holy, so no one can learn to be so, in a short time, and when he will. It implies it in the text, which names a qualification, which we know in matter of fact does ordinarily take time to gain. It propounds it clearly, though in figure, in the parable of the wedding garment, in which inward sanctification is made a condition distinct from our acceptance of the proffer of mercy, and not negligently to be passed over in our thoughts as if a necessary consequence of it; and in that of the ten virgins, which shows us that we must meet the bridegroom with the oil of holiness, and that it takes time to procure it. And it solemnly assures us in St. Paul's Epistles, that it is possible so to presume on Divine grace, as to let slip the accepted time, and be sealed even before the end of life to a reprobate mind.*

I wish to speak to you, my brethren, not as if aliens from God's mercies, but as partakers of His gracious covenant in Christ; and for this reason in especial peril, since those only can incur the sin of making void his covenant, who have the privilege of it. Yet neither on the other hand do I speak to you as wilful and obstinate sinners, exposed to the imminent risk of forfeiting, or the chance of having forfeited, your hope of heaven. But I fear there are those, who, if they dealt faithfully with their consciences, would be obliged to own that they had not made the service of God their first and great concern; that their obedience, so to call it, has been a matter of course, in which the heart has

* Heb. vi. 4—6; x. 26—29. vid. also 2 Pet. ii. 20. 22.

had no part; that they have acted uprightly in worldly matters chiefly for the sake of their worldly interest. I fear there are those, who, whatever be their sense of religion, yet have such misgivings about themselves, as lead them to make resolve to obey God more exactly some future day, such misgivings as convict them of sin, though not enough to bring before them its heinousness or its peril. Such men are trifling with the appointed season of mercy. To obtain the gift of holiness is the work of *a life*. No man will ever be perfect here, so sinful is our nature. Thus, in putting off the day of repentance, these men are reserving for a few chance years, when strength and vigour are gone, that work for which a *whole* life would not be enough. That work is great and arduous beyond expression. There is much of sin remaining even in the best of men, and “if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”* Their doom may be fixed any moment; and though this thought should not make a man despair to-day, yet it should ever make him tremble for to-morrow.

Perhaps, however, others may say:—“We know something of the power of religion—we love it in a measure—we have many right thoughts—we come to church to pray; this is a proof that we are prepared for heaven:—we are safe, and what has been said does not apply to us.” But be not you, my brethren, in the number of these. One principal test of our being true servants of God is our wishing to serve Him better; and be quite sure that a man who is contented with his own proficiency in Christian holiness, is at best in a dark state, or rather in great peril. If we are really imbued with the grace of holiness, we shall abhor sin as something base, irrational, and polluting. Many men, it is true, are contented with partial and indistinct views of religion, and mixed motives. Be you content with nothing short of perfection; exert yourselves day by day to grow in knowledge and grace; that, if so be, you may at length attain to the presence of Almighty God.

Lastly; while we thus labour to mould our hearts after the pattern of the holiness of our Heavenly Father, it is our comfort to know, what I have already implied, that we are not left to ourselves, but that the Holy Ghost is graciously present with us, and enables us to triumph over, and to change our own minds. It is a comfort and encouragement, while it is an anxious and awful thing, to know that God works in and through us.† We are the instruments, but we are only the instruments, of our own salvation. Let no one say that I discourage him,

* 1 Pet. iv. 18.

† 1 Phil. ii. 12, 13.

and propose to him a task beyond his strength. All of us have the gifts of grace pledged to us from our youth up. We know this well ; but we do not use our privilege. We form mean ideas of the difficulty of our duties, and in consequence never enter into the greatness of the gifts given us to meet it. Then afterwards, if perchance we gain a deeper insight into the work we have to do, we think God a hard master, who commands much from a sinful race. Narrow, indeed, is the way of life, but infinite is His love and power who is with the Church, in Christ's place, to guide us along it.

SERMON II.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

MATTHEW xvi. 26.

“What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

I suppose there is no tolerably-informed Christian but considers he has a correct notion of the difference between our religion and the paganism which it supplanted. Every one, if asked what it is we have gained by the Gospel, will promptly answer, that we have gained the knowledge of our immortality, of our having souls which will live for ever: that the heathen did not know this, but that Christ taught it, and that His disciples know it. Every one will say, and say truly, that this was the great and solemn doctrine which gave the Gospel a claim to be heard when first preached, which arrested the thoughtless multitudes, who were busied in the pleasures and pursuits of this life, awed them with the vision of the life to come, and sobered them till they turned to God with a true heart. It will be said, and said truly, that this doctrine of a future life was the doctrine which broke the power and the fascination of paganism. The poor benighted heathen were engaged in all the frivolities and absurdities of a false ritual, which had obscured the light of nature. They knew God, but they forsook Him for the inventions of men: they made protectors and guardians for themselves; and had “gods many and lords many.”* They had their profane worship, their gaudy processions, their indulgent creed, their easy observances, their sensual festivities, their childish extravagances, such as might suitably be the religion of beings who were to live for seventy or eighty years, and then die once for all, never to live again. “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” was their doctrine and their rule of life. “To-morrow we die;”—this the Holy Apostles admitted. They taught so far as the heathen; “To-morrow we die;” but then they added, “And after death *the judgment* ;”—judgment upon the eternal soul,

* 1 Cor. viii. 5.

which lives in spite of the death of the body. And this was the truth, which awakened men to the necessity of having a better and deeper religion than that which had spread over the earth, when Christ came,—which so wrought upon them that they left that old false worship of theirs, and it fell. Yes ! though throned in all the power of the world, a sight such as eye had never before seen, though supported by the great and the many, the magnificence of kings and the stubbornness of people, it fell. Its ruins remain scattered over the face of the earth ; the shattered works of its great upholder, that fierce enemy of God, the Pagan Roman Empire. Those ruins are found even among ourselves, and show how marvellously great was its power, and therefore how much more powerful was that which broke its power ; and this was the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. So entire is the revolution which is produced among men, wherever this high truth is really received.

I have said that every one of us is able fluently to speak of this doctrine, and is aware that the knowledge of it forms the fundamental difference between our state and that of the heathen. And yet, in spite of our being able to speak about it and our “form of knowledge,”* (as St. Paul terms it,) there seems scarcely room to doubt, that the greater number of those who are called Christians in no true sense realize it in their own minds at all. Indeed it is a very difficult thing to bring home to us ; and to feel that we have souls ; and there cannot be a more fatal mistake than to suppose we see what the doctrine means, as soon as we can use the words which signify it. So great a thing is it to understand that we have souls, that the knowing it, taken in connexion with its results, is all one with *being serious*, i. e. truly religious. To discern our immortality is necessarily connected with fear and trembling and repentance, in the case of every Christian. Who is there but would be sobered by an actual sight of the flames of hell fire and the souls therein hopelessly enclosed ? Would not all his thoughts be drawn to that awful sight, so that he would stand still gazing fixedly upon it and forgetting every thing else ; seeing nothing else, hearing nothing, engrossed with the contemplation of it ; and when the sight was withdrawn, still having it fixed in his memory, so that he would be henceforth dead to the pleasures and employments of this world, considered in themselves, thinking of them only in their reference to that fearful vision ? This would be the overpowering effect of such a disclosure, whether it actually led a man to repentance or not. And thus absorbed in the thought of the life to come are they who really and heartily re-

* Rom. ii. 20.

ceive the words of Christ and His Apostles. Yet to this state of mind, and therefore to this true knowledge, the multitude, of men called Christian are certainly strangers; a thick veil is drawn over their eyes; and in spite of their being able to talk of the doctrine, they are as if they never had heard of it. They go on just as the heathen did of old: they eat, they drink; or they amuse themselves in vanities, and live in the world, without fear and without sorrow, just as if God had not declared that their conduct in this life would decide their destiny in the next; just as if they either had no souls, or had nothing or little to do with the saving of them, which was the creed of the heathen.

Now let us consider what it is to bring home to ourselves that we have souls, and in what the especial difficulty of it lies; for this may be of use to us in our attempt to realize that awful truth.

We are from our birth apparently dependent on things about us. We see and feel that we could not live or go forward without the aid of man. To a child this world is every thing: he seems to himself a part of this world,—a part of this world, in the same sense in which a branch is part of a tree; he has little notion of his own separate and independent existence; that is, he has no just idea he has a soul. And if he goes through life with his notions unchanged, he has no just notion, even to the end of life, that he has a soul. He views himself merely in his connexion with this world, which is his all; he looks to this world for his good, as to an idol; and when he tries to look beyond this life, he is able to discern nothing in prospect, because he has no idea of any thing, nor can fancy any thing, *but* this life. And if he is obliged to fancy something, he fancies this life over again; just as the heathen, when they reflected on those traditions of another life, which were floating among them, could but fancy the happiness of the blessed to consist in the enjoyment of the sun, and the sky, and the earth, as before, only as if these were to be more splendid than they are now.

To understand that we have souls, is to feel our separation from things visible, our independence of them, our distinct existence in ourselves, our individuality, our power of acting for ourselves this way or that way, our accountableness for what we do. These are the great truths which lie wrapped up indeed even in a child's mind, and which God's grace can unfold there in spite of the influence of the external world; but at first this outward world prevails. We look off from self to the things around us, and forget ourselves in them. Such is our state,—a depending for support on the reeds which are no stay, and overlooking our real strength,—at the time when God begins His process of reclaiming us to a truer view of our place in His great system of providence. And when He visits us, then in a little while there is

a stirring within us. The unprofitableness and feebleness of the things of this world are forced upon our minds ; they promise but cannot perform, they disappoint us. Or, if they do perform what they promise, still, (so it is,) they do not satisfy us. We still crave for something, we do not well know what ; but we are sure it is something which the world has not given us. And then its changes are so many, so sudden, so silent, so continual. It never leaves changing ; it goes on to change, till we are quite sick at heart :—then it is that our reliance on it is broken. It is plain we cannot continue to depend upon it, unless we keep pace with it, and go on changing too ; but this we cannot do. We feel that, while it changes, we are one and the same ; and thus, under God's blessing, we come to have some glimpse of the meaning of our independence of things temporal, and our immortality. And should it so happen that misfortunes come upon us, (as they often do,) then still more are we led to understand the nothingness of this world ; then still more are we led to distrust it, and are weaned from the love of it, till at length it floats before our eyes merely as some idle veil, which, notwithstanding its many tints, cannot hide the view of what is beyond it ;—and we begin, by degrees, to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe, our own soul, and the God who made it.

Sublime, unlooked-for doctrine, yet most true ! To every one of us there are but two beings in the whole world, himself and God ; for, as to this outward scene, its pleasures and pursuits, its honours and cares, its contrivances, its personages, its kingdoms, its multitude of busy slaves, what are they to us ? nothing—no more than a show :—“ The world passeth away and the lust thereof.” And as to those others nearer to us, who are not to be classed with the vain world, I mean our friends and relations, whom we are right in loving, these, too, after all, are nothing to us here. They cannot really help or profit us ; we see them, and they act upon us, only (as it were) at a distance, through the medium of sense ; they cannot get at our souls ; they cannot enter into our thoughts, or really be companions to us. In the next world it will, through God's mercy, be otherwise : but here we enjoy, not their presence, but the anticipation of what one day shall be ; so that, after all, they vanish before the clear vision we have, first, of our own existence, next, of the presence of the great God in us, and over us, as our Governor and Judge, who dwells in us by our conscience, which is His representative.

And now consider what a revolution will take place in the mind that is not utterly reprobate, in proportion as it realizes this relation between itself and the most high God. We never in this life can fully understand what is meant by our living for ever, but we can understand

what is meant by this world's *not* living for ever, by its dying never to rise again. And learning this, we learn that we owe it no service, no allegiance; it has no claim over us, and can do us no material good nor harm. On the other hand, the law of God written on our hearts bids us serve Him, and partly tells us how to serve Him, and Scripture completes the precepts which nature began. And both Scripture and conscience tell us we are answerable for what we do, and that God is a righteous Judge; and, above all, our Saviour, as our visible Lord God, takes the place of the world as the Only-begotten of the Father, having shown Himself openly, that we may not say that God is hidden. And thus a man is drawn forward by all manner of powerful influences to turn from things temporal to things eternal, to deny himself, to take up his cross and follow Christ. For there are Christ's awful threats and warnings to make him serious, His precepts to attract and elevate him, His promises to cheer him, His gracious deeds and sufferings to humble him to the dust, and to bind his heart once and for ever in gratitude to Him who is so surpassing in mercy. All these things act upon him; and, as truly as St. Matthew rose from the receipt of custom when Christ called, heedless what bystanders would say of him, so they who, through grace, obey the secret voice of God, move onward contrary to the world's way, and careless what mankind may say of them, as understanding that, they have souls, which is the one thing they have to care about.

I am well aware that there are indiscreet teachers gone forth into the world, who use language such as I have used, but mean something very different. Such are they who deny the grace of baptism, and think that a man is converted to God all at once. But I have no need now to mention the difference between their teaching and that of Scripture. Whatever their peculiar errors are, so far as they say that we are by nature blind and sinful, and must, through God's grace and our own endeavours, learn that we have souls and rise to a new life, severing ourselves from the world that is, and walking by faith in what is unseen and future, so far they say true, for they speak the words of Scripture; which says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil; wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."*

Let us, then, seriously question ourselves, and beg of God grace to do so honestly, whether we are loosened from the world; or whether, living as dependent on it, and not on the Eternal Author of our being, we are in fact taking our portion with this perishing outward scene, and

* Eph. v. 14—17.

ignorant of our having souls. I know very well that such thoughts are distasteful to the minds of men in general. Doubtless many a one there is, who, on hearing doctrines such as I have been insisting on, says in his heart, that religion is thus made gloomy and repulsive; that he would attend to a teacher who spoke in a less severe way; and that in fact Christianity was not intended to be a dark burdensome law, but a religion of cheerfulness and joy. This is what young people think, though they do not express it in this argumentative form. They view a strict life as something offensive and hateful; they turn from the notion of it. And then, as they get older and see more of the world, they learn to defend their opinion, and express it more or less in the way in which I have just put it. They hate and oppose the truth, as it were upon principle; and the more they are told that they have souls, the more resolved they are to live as if they had not souls. But let us take it as a clear point from the first, and not to be disputed, that religion must ever be difficult to those who neglect it. All things that we have to learn are difficult at first; and our duties to God, and to man for His sake, are peculiarly difficult, because they call upon us to take up a new life, and quit the love of this world for the next. It cannot be avoided; we must fear and be in sorrow, before we can rejoice. The Gospel must be a burden before it comforts and brings us peace. No one can have his heart cut away from the natural objects of its love, without pain during the process and throbbings afterwards. This is plain from the nature of the case; and, however true it be, that this or that teacher may be harsh and repulsive, yet he cannot materially alter things. Religion is in itself at first a weariness to the worldly mind, and it requires an effort and a self-denial in every one who honestly determines to be religious.

But there are other persons who are far more hopeful than those I have been speaking of, who, when they hear repentance and newness of life urged on them, are frightened at the thought of the greatness of the work; they are disheartened at being told to do so much. Now let it be well understood, that to realize our own individual accountability and immortality, of which I have been speaking, is not required of them all at once. I never said a person was not in a hopeful way who did not thus fully discern the world's vanity and the worth of his soul. But a man is truly in a very desperate way, who does not wish, who does not try, to discern and feel all this. I want a man on the one hand to confess his immortality with his lips, and on the other, to live as if he tried to understand his own words, and then he is in the way of salvation; he is in the way towards heaven, even though he has not yet fully emancipated himself from the fetters of this world.

Indeed none of us (of course) are entirely loosened from this world. We all use words, in speaking of our duties, higher and fuller than we really understand. No one entirely realizes what is meant by his having a soul; even the best of men are but in a state of progress towards the simple truth; and the most weak and ignorant of those who seek after it cannot but be in progress. And therefore no one need be alarmed at hearing that he has much to do before he arrives at a right view of his own condition in God's sight, i. e. at *faith*; for we all have much to do, and the great point is, are we willing to do it?

Oh that there were such a heart in us, to put aside this visible world, to desire to look at it as a mere screen between us and God, and think of Him who has entered in beyond the veil, and who is watching us, trying us, yes, and blessing, and influencing, and encouraging, us towards good, day by day! Yet, alas, how do we suffer the mere varying circumstances of every day to sway us! How difficult it is to remain firm and in one mind under the seductions or terrors of the world! We feel variously according to the place, time, and people we are with. We are serious on Sunday, and we sin deliberately on Monday. We rise in the morning with remorse at our offences and resolutions of amendment, yet before night we have transgressed again. The mere change of society puts us into a new frame of mind; nor do we sufficiently understand this great weakness of ours, or seek for strength where alone it can be found, in the Unchangeable God. What will be our thoughts in that day, when at length this outward world drops away altogether, and we find ourselves where we ever have been, in His presence, with Christ standing at His right hand!

On the contrary, what a blessed discovery is it to those who make it, that this world is but vanity and without substance; and that really they are ever in their Saviour's presence. This is a thought which it is scarcely right to enlarge upon in a mixed congregation, where there may be some who have not given their hearts to God; for why should the privileges of the true Christian be disclosed to mankind at large, and sacred subjects, which are his peculiar treasure, be made common to the careless liver? He knows his blessedness, and needs not another to tell it him. He knows in whom he has believed; and in the hour of danger or trouble he knows what is meant by that peace, which Christ did not explain when He gave it to His Apostles, but merely said it was not as the world could give.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."*

* Isaiah xxvi. 3, 4.

SERMON III.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL WITHOUT OBEDIENCE.

JOHN xiii. 17.

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

THERE never was a people or an age to which these words could be more suitably addressed than to this country at this time; because we know more of the way to serve God, of our duties, our privileges, and our reward, than any other people hitherto, as far as we have the means of judging. To us then especially our Saviour says, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

Now, doubtless, many of us think we know this very well. It seems a very trite thing to say, that it is nothing to *know* what is right, unless we *do* it; an old subject about which nothing new can be said. When we read such passages in Scripture, we pass over them as admitting them without dispute; and thus we contrive practically to forget them. Knowledge is nothing compared with doing; but the *knowing* that knowledge is nothing, we make to be *something*, we make it count, and thus we cheat ourselves.

This we do in parallel cases also. Many a man instead of *learning* humility in practice, confesses himself a poor sinner, and next *prides* himself upon the confession; he ascribes the glory of his redemption to God, and then becomes in a manner proud that he is redeemed. He is proud of his so-called humility.

Doubtless Christ spoke no words in vain. The Eternal Wisdom of God did not utter His voice that we might at once catch up His words in an irreverent manner, think we understand them at a glance, and pass them over. But his word endureth for ever; it has a depth of meaning suited to all times and places, and hardly and painfully to be understood in any. They, who think they enter into it easily, may be quite sure they do not enter into it at all.

Now then let us try, by His grace, to make the text a living word to the benefit of our souls. Our Lord says, “If ye know, happy are ye, if ye do.” Let us consider *how* we commonly read Scripture.

We read a passage in the Gospels, for instance, a parable perhaps, or the account of a miracle; or we read a chapter in the prophets, or a psalm. Who is not struck with the beauty of what he reads? I do not wish to speak of those who read the Bible only now and then, and who will in consequence generally find its sacred pages dull and uninteresting; but of those who study it. Who of such persons does not see the beauty of it? for instance, take the passage which introduces the text. Christ had been washing His disciples' feet. He did so at a season of great mental suffering; it was just before He was seized by His enemies to be put to death. The traitor, His familiar friend, was in the room. All of his disciples, even the most devoted of them, loved Him much less than they thought they did. In a little while they were all to forsake Him and flee. This He foresaw; yet he calmly washed their feet, and then He told them that He did so by way of an example; that they should be full of lowly services one to the other, as He to them; that he among them was in fact the highest who put himself the lowest. This he had said before; and his disciples must have recollected it. Perhaps they might wonder in their secret hearts *why* He repeated the lesson; they might say to themselves, "We have heard this before." They might be surprised that His significant action, His washing their feet, issued in nothing else than a precept already delivered, the command to be humble. At the same time they would not be able to deny, or rather they would deeply feel, the beauty of His action. Nay, as loving Him (after all,) above all things, and reverencing Him as their Lord and Teacher, they would feel an admiration and awe of Him; but their minds would not rest sufficiently on the *practical* direction of the instruction vouchsafed to them. They knew the truth, and they admired it; they did not observe what it was they lacked. Such may be considered their frame of mind; and hence the force of the text, delivered primarily against Judas Iscariot, who knew and sinned deliberately against the truth; secondarily, referring to all the Apostles, and St. Peter chiefly, who promised to be faithful, but failed under the trial; lastly, to us all,—all of us here assembled, who hear the word of life continually, know it, admire it, do all but obey it.

Is it not so? is not Scripture altogether pleasant except in its strictness? do not we try to persuade ourselves, that to *feel* religiously, to confess our love of religion, and to be able to talk of religion, will stand in the place of careful obedience, of that *self-denial* which is the very substance of true practical religion? Alas! that religion which is so delightful as a vision, should be so distasteful as a reality. Yet so it is, whether we are aware of the fact or not.

1. The multitude of persons even who profess religion are in this state

of mind. We will take the case of those who are in better circumstances than the mass of the community. They are well educated and taught; they have few distresses in life, or are able to get over them by the variety of their occupations, by the spirits which attend good health, or at least by the lapse of time. They go on respectably and happily, with the same general tastes and habits which they would have had if the Gospel had not been given them. They have an eye to what the world thinks of them; are charitable when it is expected. They are polished in their manners, kind from natural disposition or a feeling of propriety. Thus their religion is based upon self and the world, a mere civilization of the mind; the same (I say,) as it would have been in the main, (taking the state of society as they find it,) even supposing Christianity were not the religion of the land. But it is; and let us go on to ask, how do they in consequence feel towards it? They accept it, they add it to what they *are*, they ingraft it upon the selfish and worldly habits of an unrenewed heart. They have been taught to revere it, and to believe it to come from God; so they admire it, and accept it as a rule of life, so far forth as it agrees with the carnal principles which govern them. So far as it does *not* agree, they are blind to its excellence and its claims. They overlook or explain away its precepts. They in no sense obey *because* it commands. They do right where they *would* have done right had it not commanded; however, they speak well of it, and think they understand it. Sometimes, if I may continue the description, they adopt it into a certain refined elegance of sentiments and manners, and then their religion is all that is graceful, fastidious, and luxurious. They love religious poetry and eloquent preaching. They desire to have their feelings roused and soothed, and to secure a variety and relief of that eternal subject which is unchangeable. They tire of its simplicity, and perhaps seek to keep up their interest in it by means of religious narratives, fictitious or embellished, or of news from foreign countries, or of the history of the prospects or successes of the Gospel: thus perverting what is in itself good and innocent. This is their state of mind at best; for more commonly they think it enough merely to show some slight regard to the subject of religion; to attend its services on the Lord's day, and then only once, and coldly to express an approbation of it. But of course every description of such persons can be but general: for the shades of character are so varied and blended in individuals, as to make it impossible to give an accurate picture, and often very estimable persons and truly good Christians are partly infected with this bad and earthly spirit.

2. Take again another description of them. They have perhaps turned their attention to the means of promoting the happiness of their

fellow-creatures, and have formed a system of morality and religion of their own; then they come to Scripture. They are much struck with the high tone of its precepts, and the beauty of its teaching. It is true, they find many things in it which they do not understand or do not approve; many things they would not have said themselves. But they pass these by; they fancy that these do not apply to the present day, (which is an easy way of removing any thing we do not like,) and *on the whole* they receive the Bible, and they think it highly serviceable for the lower classes. Therefore, they recommend it, and support the institutions which are the channels of teaching it. But as to their own case, it never comes into their minds to apply its precepts seriously to themselves; they *know* them already, they consider. They *know* them and that is enough; but as for *doing* them, by which I mean, going forward to obey them with an unaffected earnestness and an honest faith *acting upon* them, receiving them as they are, and not as their own previously formed opinions would have them be, they have nothing of this right spirit. They do not contemplate such a mode of acting. To recommend and affect a moral and decent conduct, (on *whatever* principles,) seems to them to be enough. The spread of knowledge bringing in its train a selfish temperance, a selfish peaceableness, a selfish benevolence, the morality of expedience, this satisfies them. They care for none of the truths of Scripture, *on the ground* of their being in Scripture; these scarcely become more valuable in their eyes for being there written. They do not obey *because* they are told to obey, on faith; and the need of this divine principle of conduct they do not comprehend. Why will it not answer (they seem to say,) to make men good in one way as well as another? "Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, are they not better than all the waters of Israel?" as if all the knowledge and the training that books ever gave had power to unloose one sinner from the bonds of Satan, or to effect more than an outward reformation, an *appearance* of obedience; as if it were not a far different principle, a principle independent of knowledge, above it and before it, which leads to *real* obedience, that principle of divine faith, given from above, which has life in itself, and has power really to use knowledge to the soul's welfare; in the hand of which knowledge is (as it were) the torch lighting us on our way, but not teaching or strengthening us to walk.

3. Or take another view of the subject. Is it not one of the most common excuses made by the poor for being irreligious, that they have had no education? as if to know much was a necessary step for right practice. Again, they are apt to think it *enough* to know and to talk of religion, to make a man religious. Why have you come hither

to-day, my brethen?—not as a matter of course, I will hope; not merely because friends or superiors told you to come. I will suppose you have come to church *as a religious act*; but beware of supposing that all is done^{and} over by the act of coming. It is not enough to be *presen* here; though many men act as if they forgot they must attend to what is going on, as well as come. It is not enough to listen to what is preached; though many think they have gone a great way when they do this. You *must pray*; now this is very hard in itself to any one who tries (and this is the reason why so many men prefer the sermon to the prayers, because the former is merely the getting *knowledge*, and the latter is to do a *deed* of obedience): you must *pray*; and this I say is very difficult, because our thoughts so are apt to wander. But even this is not all;—you must, as you pray, really intend to *try to practice* what you pray for. When you say, “Lead us not into temptation,” you must in good earnest mean to avoid in your daily conduct those temptations which you have already suffered from. When you say, “Deliver us from evil,” you must mean to struggle against that evil in your hearts, which you are conscious of, and which you pray to be forgiven. This is difficult; still more is behind. You must actually carry your good intentions into effect during the week, and in truth and reality war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And any one here present who falls short of this, that is, who thinks it enough to come to church to *learn* God’s will, but does not bear in mind to do it in his daily conduct, be he high or be he low, know he mysteries and all knowledge, or be he unlettered and busily occupied in active life, he is a fool in His sight, who maketh the wisdom of this world foolishness. Surely he is but a trifler, as substituting a formal outward service for the religion of the heart; and he reverses our Lord’s words in the text, “because he knows these things, most unhappy is he, because he does them not.”

But some one may say, “It is so very *difficult* to serve God, it is so much against my own mind, such an effort, such a strain upon my strength to bear Christ’s yoke, I must give it over, or I must delay it at least. Can nothing be taken instead? I acknowledge His law to be most holy and true, and the accounts I read about good men are most delightful. I wish I were like them with all my heart; and for a little while I feel in a mind to set about imitating them. I have begun several times, I have had seasons of repentance, and set rules to myself; but for some reason or other I fell back after a while, and was even worse than before. I know, but I cannot do.” O wretched man that I am!”

Now to such a one I say, You are in a much more promising state

than if you were contented with yourself, and thought that knowledge was every thing, which is the grievous blindness which I have hitherto been speaking of; that is, you are in a better state, if you do not feel too much comfort or confidence in your confession. For *this* is the fault of many men: they make such an acknowledgement as I have described a *substitute* for real repentance; or allow themselves, after making it, to *put off* repentance, as if they could be suffered to give a word of promise which did not become due (so to say) for many days. You are, I admit, in a better state than if you were satisfied with yourself, *but you are not in a safe state*. If you were now to die, you would have no hope of salvation: no hope, that is, if your own showing be true, for I am taking your own words. Go before God's judgment-seat, and there plead that you know the Truth and have not done it. This is what you frankly own;—how will it there be taken? “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee,” says our Judge Himself, and who shall reverse His judgment? Therefore such a one must make the confession with great and real terror and shame, if it is to be considered a promising sign in him; else it is mere hardness of heart. For instance: I have heard persons say lightly, (every one must have heard them,) that they own it would be a wretched thing indeed for them or their companions to be taken off suddenly. The young are especially apt to say this; that is, before they have come to an age to be callous, or have formed excuses to overcome the natural true sense of their conscience. They say they hope some day to repent. This is their own witness against themselves, like that bad prophet at Bethel who was constrained with his own mouth to utter God's judgments while he sat at his sinful meat. But let not such a one think that he will receive any thing of the Lord: he does not speak in faith.

When, then, a man complains of his hardness of heart or weakness of purpose, let him see to it whether this complaint is more than a mere pretence to quiet his conscience, which is frightened at his putting off repentance: or, again, more than a mere idle word, said half in jest and half in compunction. But, should he be earnest in his complaint, then let him consider he has no need to complain. Every thing is plain and easy to the earnest: it is the double-minded who find difficulties. If you hate your own corruption in sincerity and truth, if you are really pierced to the heart that you do not do what you know you should do, if you *would* love God if you could, then the Gospel speaks to you words of peace and hope. It is a very different thing indolently to say, “I would I were a different man,” and to close with God's offer to make you different when it is put before you. Here is the test between earnestness and insincerity. You say you wish to be a different man;

Christ takes you at your word, so to say ; He offers to make you different. He says, "I will take away from you the heart of stone, the love of this world and its pleasures, if you will submit to My discipline." Here a man draws back. No : he cannot bear to *lose* the love of the world, to part with his present desires and tastes ; he cannot *consent* to be changed. After all he is well satisfied at the bottom of his heart to remain as he is, only he wants his conscience taken out of the way. Did Christ offer to do this for him, if He would but make bitter sweet, and sweet bitter, darkness light and light darkness, *then* he would hail the glad tidings of peace ;—till then he needs Him not.

But if a man is in earnest in wishing to get at the depths of his own heart, to expel the evil, to purify the good, and to gain power over himself, so as to do as well as know the Truth, what is the difficulty ?—a matter of time indeed, but not of uncertainty is the recovery of such a man. So simple is the rule which he must follow, and so trite, that at first he will be surprised to hear it. God does great things by plain methods ; and men start from them through pride, *because* they are plain. This was the conduct of Naaman the Syrian. Christ says, "Watch and pray ;" herein lies our cure. To watch and to pray are surely in our power, and by these means we are certain of getting strength. You feel your weakness ; you fear to be overcome by temptation : then keep out of the way of it. This is watching. Avoid society which is likely to mislead you ; flee from the very shadow of evil ; you cannot be too careful ; better be a little too strict than a little too easy,—it is the safer side. Abstain from reading books which are dangerous to you. Turn from bad thoughts when they arise, set about some business, begin conversing with some friend, or say to yourself the Lord's Prayer with seriousness and reverence. When you are urged by temptation, whether it be by the threats of the world, false shame, self-interest, provoking conduct on the part of another, or the world's sinful pleasures, urged to be cowardly, or covetous, or unforgiving, or sensual, shut your eyes and think of Christ's precious blood-shedding. Do not dare to say you cannot help sinning ; a little attention to these points will go far, (through God's grace,) to keep you in the right way. And again, pray as well as watch. You must know that you can do nothing of yourself ; your past experience has taught you this ; therefore look to God for the will and the power ; ask Him earnestly in His Son's name ; seek His holy ordinances. Is not *this* in your power ; Have you not power at least over the limbs of your body, so as to attend the means of grace constantly ? Have you literally not the power to come hither ; to observe the Fasts and Festivals of the Church ; to come to His Holy Altar and receive the Bread

of Life? Get yourself, at least, to do this; to put out the hand, to take His gracious Body and Blood; this is no arduous work;—and you say you really *wish* to gain the blessings He offers. What would you have more than a free gift, vouchsafed “without money and without price?” So, make no more excuses; murmur not about your own bad heart, your knowing and resolving, and not doing. Here is your remedy.

Well were it if men could be persuaded to be in earnest; but few are thus minded. The many go on with a double aim, trying to serve both God and mammon. Few can get themselves to do what is right, *because* God tells them; they have another aim; they desire to please self or men. When they can obey God without offending the bad Master that rules them, then, and then only, they obey. Thus religion, instead of being the *first* thing in their estimation, is but the second. They differ, indeed, one from another what to put foremost: one man loves to be at ease, another to be busy, another to enjoy domestic comfort: but they agree in converting the Truth of God, which they know to be Truth, into a mere instrument of secular aims; not discarding the truth but degrading it.

When He, the Lord of Hosts, comes to shake terribly the earth, what number will He find of the remnant of the true Israel? We live in an educated age. The false gloss of a mere worldly refinement makes us decent and amiable. We all know and profess. We think ourselves wise; we flatter each other; we make excuses for ourselves when we are conscious we sin, and thus we gradually lose the consciousness that we are sinning. We think our own times superior to all others. “Thou blind Pharisee!” This was the fatal charge brought by our blessed Lord against the falsely enlightened teachers of His own day. As we desire to enter into life, may we come to Christ continually for the two foundations of true Christian faith,—humbleness of mind and earnestness!

SERMON IV.

SECRET FAULTS.


PSALM xix. 12.

“Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.”

STRANGE as it may seem, multitudes called Christian go through life with no effort to obtain a correct knowledge of themselves. They are contented with general and vague impressions concerning their real state; and if they have more than this, it is merely such accidental information about themselves as the events of life force upon them. But exact, systematic knowledge they have none, and do not aim at it.

When I say this is *strange*, I do not mean to imply that to know ourselves is *easy*; it is very difficult to know ourselves even in part, and so far ignorance of ourselves is not a strange thing. But its strangeness consists in this, viz., that men should profess to receive and act upon the great Christian doctrines, while they are thus ignorant of themselves, considering that self-knowledge is a necessary condition for understanding them. Thus it is not too much to say that all those who neglect the duty of habitual self-examination are using words without meaning. The doctrines of the *forgiveness* of sins, and a *new birth* from sin, cannot be understood without some right knowledge of the *nature* of sin, that is, of our own heart. We may, indeed, assent to a form of words which declares those doctrines; but if such a mere assent, however sincere, is the same as a real *holding of* them, and belief in them, then it is equally possible to believe in a proposition the terms of which belong to some foreign language, which is obviously absurd. Yet nothing is more common than for men to think that because they are familiar with words, they understand the ideas they stand for. Educated persons despise this fault in illiterate men who use hard words as if they comprehended them. Yet they themselves, as well as others, fall into the same error in a more subtle form, when they think they understand terms used in morals and religion, because such are common words, and have been used by them all their lives.

Now (I repeat) unless we have some just idea of our hearts and of



sin, we can have no right idea of a Moral Governor, a Saviour, or a Sanctifier, that is, in professing to believe in Them, we shall be using words without attaching distinct meaning to them. Thus self-knowledge is at the root of all real religious knowledge; and it is in vain,—worse than vain, it is a deceit and a mischief, to think to understand the Christian doctrines as a matter of course, merely by being taught by books, or by attending sermons, or by any outward means, however excellent, taken by themselves. For it is in proportion as we search our hearts and understand our own nature, that we understand what is meant by an Infinite Governor and Judge; in proportion as we comprehend the nature of disobedience and our actual sinfulness, that we feel what is the blessing of the removal of sin, redemption, pardon, sanctification, which otherwise are mere words. God speaks to us primarily in our hearts. Self-knowledge is the key to the precepts and doctrines of Scripture. The very utmost any outward notices of religion can do, is to startle us and make us turn inward and search our hearts; and then, when we have experienced what it is to read ourselves, we shall profit by the doctrines of the Church and the Bible.

Of course self-knowledge admits of degrees. No one, perhaps, is *entirely* ignorant of himself: and even the most advanced Christian knows himself only “in part.” However, most men are contented with a slight acquaintance with their hearts, and therefore a superficial faith. This is the point which it is my purpose to insist upon. Men are satisfied to have numberless secret faults. They do not think about them, either as sins or as obstacles to strength of faith, and live on as if they had nothing to learn.

Now let us consider attentively the strong presumption that exists, that we all have serious secret faults; a fact which, I believe, all are ready to confess in general terms, though few like calmly and practically to dwell upon it; as I now wish to do.

1. Now the most ready method of convincing ourselves of the existence in us of faults unknown to ourselves, is to consider how plainly we see the secret faults of others. At first sight there is of course no reason for supposing that we differ materially from those around us; and if we see sins in them which *they* do not see, it is a presumption that they have their own discoveries about ourselves, which it would surprise us to hear. For instance: how apt is an angry man to fancy that he has the command of himself! The very charge of being angry, if brought against him, will anger him more; and in the height of his discomposure, he will profess himself able to reason and judge with clearness and impartiality. Now, it may be his turn another day, for what we know, to witness the same failing in us; or, if we are not

naturally inclined to violent passion, still at least we may be subject to other sins, equally unknown to ourselves, and equally known to him as his anger was to us. For example: there are persons who act mainly from self-interest at times when they conceive they are doing generous or virtuous actions; they give freely, or put themselves to trouble, and are praised by the world, and by themselves, as if acting on high principle; whereas, close observers can detect desire of gain, love of applause, shame, or the mere satisfaction of being busy and active, as the principal cause of their good deeds. This may be our condition as well as that of others; or, if it be not, still a similar infirmity, the bondage of some other sin or sins, which others see, and we do not.

But, say there is no human being sees sin in us, of which we are not aware ourselves, (though this is a bold supposition to make,) yet why should man's accidental knowledge of us limit the extent of our imperfections? Should all the world speak well of us, and good men hail us as brothers, after all there is a Judge who trieth the hearts and the reins. He knows our real state; have we earnestly besought Him to teach us the knowledge of our own hearts? If we have not, that very omission is a presumption against us. Though our praise were throughout the Church, we may be sure He sees sins without number in us, sins deep and heinous, of which we have no idea. If man sees so much evil in human nature, what must God see? "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Not *acts* alone of sin does He set down against us daily, of which we know nothing, but the thoughts of the heart too. The stirrings of pride, vanity, covetousness, impurity, discontent, resentment, these succeed each other through the day in momentary emotions, and are known to Him. We know them not; but how much does it concern us to know them!

2. This consideration is suggested by the first view of the subject. Now reflect upon the *actual disclosures* of our hidden weakness, which accidents occasion. Peter followed Christ boldly, and suspected not his own heart, till it betrayed him in the hour of temptation, and led him to deny his Lord. David lived years of happy obedience while he was in private life. What calm, clear-sighted faith is manifested in his answer to Saul about Goliath:—"The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."* Nay, not only in retired life, in severe trial, under ill usage from Saul, he continued faithful to his God; years and years did he go on, fortifying his heart, and learning the fear of the Lord; yet power and wealth weakened his faith, and for a season over-

* 1 Sam. xvii. 37.

came him. There was a time when a prophet could retort upon him, "Thou art the man"* whom thou condemnest. He had kept his principles in words, but lost them in his heart. Hezekiah is another instance of a religious man bearing *trouble* well, but for a season falling back under the temptation of prosperity; and that, after extraordinary mercies had been vouchsafed to him.† And if these things be so in the case of the favoured saints of God, what (may we suppose) is our own real spiritual state in His sight? It is a serious thought. The warning to be deduced from it is this:—Never to think we have a due knowledge of ourselves till we have been exposed to various kinds of temptations, and tried on every side. Integrity on one side of our character is no voucher for integrity on another. We cannot tell how we should act if brought under temptations different from those which we have hitherto experienced. This thought should keep us humble. We are sinners, but we do not know how great. He alone knows who died for our sins.

3. Thus much we cannot but allow; that we do not know ourselves in those respects in which we have not been tried. But farther than this; What if we do not know ourselves even where we *have* been tried, and found faithful? It is a remarkable circumstance which has been often observed, that if we look to some of the most eminent saints of Scripture, we shall find their recorded errors to have occurred in those parts of their duty in which each had had most trial, and generally showed obedience most perfect. *Faithful* Abraham through want of faith denied his wife. Moses, the *meekest* of men, was excluded from the land of promise for a passionate word. The *wisdom* of Solomon was seduced to bow down to idols. Barnabas, again, the *son of consolation*, had a sharp contention with St. Paul. If then men, who knew themselves better than we doubtless know ourselves, had so much of hidden infirmity about them, even in those parts of their character which were most free from blame, what are we to think of ourselves? and if our very virtues be so defiled with imperfection, what must be the unknown multiplied circumstances of evil which aggravate the guilt of our sins? This is a third presumption against us.

4. Think of this too. No one begins to examine himself, and to pray to know himself, (with David in the text,) but he finds within him an abundance of faults which before were either entirely or almost entirely unknown to him. That this is so, we learn from the written lives of good men, and our own experience of others. And hence it is that the best men are ever the most humble; for, having a higher standard of excellence in their minds than others have, and knowing themselves

* 2 Sam. xii. 7.

† 2 Kings xx. 12—19.

better, they see somewhat of the breadth and depth of their own sinful nature, and are shocked and frightened at themselves. The generality of men cannot understand this; and if at times the habitual self-condemnation of religious men breaks out into words, they think it arises from affectation, or from a strange distempered state of mind, or from accidental melancholy and disquiet. Whereas, the confession of a good man against himself, is really a witness against all thoughtless persons who hear it, and a call on them to examine their own hearts. Doubtless the more we examine ourselves, the more imperfect and ignorant we shall find ourselves to be.

5. But let a man persevere in prayer and watchfulness to the day of his death, yet he will never get to the bottom of his heart. Though he know more and more of himself as he becomes more conscientious and earnest, still the full manifestation of the secrets there lodged, is reserved for another world. And at the last day who can tell the affright and horror of a man who lived to himself on earth, indulging his own evil will, following his own chance notions of truth and falsehood, shunning the cross and the reproach of Christ, when his eyes are at length opened before the throne of God, and all his innumerable sins, his habitual neglect of God, his abuse of his talents, his misapplication and waste of time, and the original unexplored sinfulness of his nature are brought clearly and fully to his view? Nay, even to the true servants of Christ, the prospect is awful. "The righteous," we are told, "will scarcely be saved."* Then will the good man undergo the full sight of his sins, which on earth he was labouring to obtain, and partly succeeded in obtaining, though life was not long enough to learn and subdue them all. Doubtless we must all endure that fierce and terrifying vision of our real selves, that last fiery trial of the soul† before its acceptance, a spiritual agony and second death to all who are not then supported by the strength of Him who died to bring them safe through it, and in whom on earth they have believed?

My brethren, I appeal to your reason whether these presumptions are not in their substance fair and just. And if so, next I appeal to your consciences, whether they are *new* to you; for if you have not even thought about your real state, nor even know how little you know of yourselves, how can you in good earnest be purifying yourselves for the next world, or be walking in the narrow way?

And yet how many are the chances that a number of those who now hear me have no sufficient knowledge of themselves, or sense of their

* 1 Pet. iv. 18.

† 1 Cor. iii. 13.

ignorance, and are in peril of their souls ! Christ's ministers cannot tell who are, and who are not, the true elect ; but when the difficulties in the way of knowing yourselves aright are considered, it becomes a most serious and immediate question for each of you to entertain, whether or not he is living a life of self-deceit, and thinking far more comfortably of his spiritual state than he has any right to do. For call to mind the impediments that are in the way of your knowing yourselves, or feeling your ignorance, and then judge.

1. First of all, self-knowledge does not come as a matter of course ; it implies an effort and a work. As well may we suppose, that the knowledge of the languages comes by nature, as that acquaintance with our own heart is natural. Now the very effort of steadily reflecting, is itself painful to many men ; not to speak of the difficulty of reflecting correctly. To ask ourselves *why* we do this or that, to take account of the principles which govern us, and see whether we act for conscience' sake or from some lower inducement, is painful. We are busy in the world, and what leisure time we have we readily devote to a less severe and wearisome employment.

2. And then comes in our self-love. We *hope* the best ; this saves us the trouble of examining. Self-love answers for our safety. We think it sufficient caution to allow for certain possible unknown faults at the utmost, and to take them *into* the reckoning when we balance our account with our conscience : whereas, if the truth were known to us, we should find we had nothing but debts, and those greater than we can conceive, and ever increasing.

3. And this favourable judgment of ourselves will especially prevail, if we have the misfortune to have uninterrupted health and high spirits, and domestic comfort. Health of body and mind is a great blessing, if we can bear it ; but unless chastened by watchings and fastings,* it will commonly seduce a man into the notion that he is much better than he really is. Resistance to our acting rightly, whether it proceeds from within or without, tries our principle ; but when things go smoothly, and we have but to wish, and we can perform, we cannot tell how far we do or do not act from a sense of duty. When a man's spirits are high, he is pleased with every thing ; and with himself especially. He can act with vigour and promptness, and he mistakes this mere constitutional energy for strength of faith. He is cheerful and contented ; and he mistakes this for Christian peace. And, if happy in his family, he mistakes mere natural affection for Christian benevolence, and the confirmed temper of Christian love. In short, he is in a dream, from

* 2 Cor. xi. 27.

which nothing could have saved him except deep humility, and nothing will ordinarily rescue him except sharp affliction.

Other accidental circumstances are frequently causes of a similar self-deceit. While we remain in retirement from the world, we do not know ourselves ; or after any great mercy or trial, which has affected us much, and given a temporary strong impulse to our obedience ; or when we are in keen pursuit of some good object, which excites the mind, and for a time deadens it to temptation. Under such circumstances, we are ready to think far too well of ourselves. The world is away ; or, at least, we are insensible to its seductions ; and we mistake our merely temporary tranquillity, or our over-wrought fervour of mind, on the one hand for Christian peace, on the other for Christian zeal.

4. Next we must consider the force of habit. Conscience at first warns us against sin ; but if we disregard it, it soon ceases to upbraid us ; and thus sins, once known, in time become secret sins. It seems then, (and it is a startling reflection,) that the more guilty we are, the less we know it ; for the oftener we sin, the less we are distressed at it. I think many of us may, on reflection, recollect instances, in our experience of ourselves, of our gradually forgetting things to be wrong which once shocked us. Such is the force of habit. By it (for instance) men contrive to allow themselves in various kinds of dishonesty. They bring themselves to affirm what is untrue, or what they are not sure is true, in the course of business. They overreach and cheat ; and, still more are they likely to fall into low and selfish ways without their observing it, and all the while to continue careful in their attendance on the Christian ordinances, and bear about them a form of religion. Or, again, they will live in self-indulgent habits ; eat and drink more than is right ; display a needless pomp and splendour in their domestic arrangements, without any misgiving ; much less do they think of simplicity of manners and abstinence as Christian duties. Now we cannot suppose they *always* thought their present mode of living to be justifiable, for *others* are still struck with its impropriety ; and what others now feel, doubtless they once felt themselves. But such is the force of habit. So again, to take as a third instance, the duty of stated private prayer ; at first it is omitted with compunction, but soon with indifference. But it is not the less a sin because we do not feel it to be such. Habit has made it a secret sin.

5. To the force of habit must be added that of custom. Every age has its own wrong ways ; and these have such influence, that even good men, from living in the world, are unconsciously misled by them. At one time a fierce persecuting hatred of those who erred in Christian doctrine has prevailed ; at another, an odious over-estimation of wealth

and the means of wealth ; at another, an irreligious veneration of the mere intellectual powers ; at another, a laxity of morals ; at another, disregard of the forms and discipline of the Church. The most religious men, unless they are especially watchful, will feel the sway of the fashion of their age ; and suffer from it, as Lot in wicked Sodom, though unconsciously. Yet their ignorance of the mischief does not change the nature of their sin ;—sin it still is, only custom makes it *secret* sin.

6. Now what is our chief guide amid the evil and seducing customs of the world ?—obviously, the Bible. “The world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.”* How much extended, then, and strengthened, necessarily must be this secret dominion of sin over us, when we consider how little we read the Scripture ! Our conscience gets corrupted,—true ; but the words of truth, though effaced from our minds, remain in Scripture, bright in their eternal youth and purity. Yet, we do not study Scripture to stir up and refresh our minds. Ask yourselves, my brethren, what do you know of the Bible ? Is there any one part of it you have read carefully, and as a whole ? One of the Gospels, for instance ? Do you know very much more of your Saviour’s works and words than you have heard read in church ? Have you compared His precepts, or St. Paul’s, or any other Apostle’s, with your own daily conduct, and prayed and endeavoured to act upon them ? If you have, so far is well ; go on to do so. If you have not, it is plain you do not possess, for you have not sought to possess, an adequate notion of that perfect Christian character which it is your duty to aim at, nor an adequate notion of your actual sinful state ; you are in the number of those who “come not to the light, lest their deeds should be re-proved.”

These remarks may serve to impress upon us the difficulty of knowing ourselves aright, and the consequent danger to which we are exposed, of speaking peace to our souls, when there is no peace.

Many things are against us ; this is plain. Yet is not our future prize worth a struggle ? Is it not worth present discomfort and pain, to accomplish an escape from the fire that never shall be quenched ? Can we endure the thought of going down to the grave with a load of sins on our head unknown and unrepented of ? Can we content ourselves with such an unreal faith in Christ, as in no sufficient measure includes self-abasement, or thankfulness, or the desire or effort to be holy ? for how can we feel our need of His help, or our dependence on Him, or our debt to Him, or the nature of His gift to us, unless we know

* Isaiah xl. 8. 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. 1 John ii. 17.

ourselves? How can we in any sense be said to have that "mind of Christ," to which the Apostle exhorts us, if we cannot follow Him to the height above, or the depth beneath; if we do not in some measure discern the cause and meaning of His sorrows, but regard the world, and man, and the system of Providence, in a light different from that which His words and acts supply? If you receive revealed truth merely through the eyes and ears, you believe words, not things; you deceive yourselves. You may conceive yourselves sound in faith, but you know nothing in any true way. Obedience to God's commandments, which implies knowledge of sin and of holiness, and the desire and endeavour to please Him, this is the only practical interpreter of Scripture doctrine. Without self-knowledge, you have no root in yourselves personally; you may endure for a time, but under affliction or persecution your faith will not last. This is why many in this age, (and in every age,) become infidels, heretics, schismatics, disloyal despisers of the Church. They cast off the form of truth, because it never has been to them more than a form. They endure not, because they never have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and they never have had experience of his power and love, because they have never known their own weakness and need. This *may* be the future condition of some of us, if we harden our hearts to-day,—*apostasy*. Some day, even in this world, we may be found openly among the enemies of God and His Church.

But, even should we be spared this present shame, what will it ultimately profit a man to profess without understanding? to *say* he has faith when he has not works? * In that case we shall remain in the heavenly vineyard, stunted plants, without the principle of growth in us, barren; and, in the end, we shall be put to shame before Christ and the holy Angels, "as trees of withering fruits, twice dead, plucked up by the roots," even though we die in outward communion with the Church.

To think of these things, and to be alarmed, is the first step towards acceptable obedience; to be at ease, is to be unsafe. We must know what the evil of sin is, hereafter, if we do not learn it here. God give us all grace to choose the pain of present repentance before the wrath to come?

* James ii. 14.

SERMON V.

SELF-DENIAL THE TEST OF RELIGIOUS EARNESTNESS.

ROMANS xiii. 11.

“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”

By “sleep,” in this passage, St. Paul means a state of insensibility to things as they really are in God’s sight. When we are asleep, we are absent from this world’s action, as if we were no longer concerned in it. It goes on without us, or, if our rest be broken, and we have some slight notion of people and occurrences about us, if we hear a voice or a sentence, and see a face, yet we are unable to catch these external objects justly and truly; we make them part of our dreams, and pervert them till they have scarcely a resemblance to what they really are;—and such is the state of men as regards religious truth. God is ever Almighty and All-knowing. He is on His throne in Heaven, trying the reins and the hearts; and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour is on His right hand; and ten thousand Angels and Saints are ministering to Him, rapt in the contemplation of Him, or by their errands of mercy connecting this world with His courts above; they go to and fro, as though upon the ladder which Jacob saw. And the disclosure of this glorious invisible world is made to us principally by means of the Bible, partly by the course of nature, partly by the floating opinions of mankind, partly by the suggestions of the heart and conscience;—and all these means of information concerning it are collected and combined by the Holy Church, which heralds the news forth to the whole earth, and applies it with power to individual minds, partly by direct instruction, partly by her very form and fashion, which witnesses to them; so that the truths of religion circulate through the world almost as the light of day, every corner and recess having some portion of its blessed rays. Such is the state of a Christian country. Meanwhile how is it with those who dwell in it? The words of the text remind us of their condition. They are *asleep*. While the Ministers of Christ are using the armour of light, and all things speak of Him, they “walk” not “becomingly, as in the day.” Many live altogether as though the day shone not on them, but the shadows still endured; and far the greater part of them are but faintly sensible of

the great truths preached around them. They see and hear as people in a dream; they mix up the Holy Word of God with their own idle imaginings; if startled for a moment, yet they soon relapse into slumber; they refuse to be awakened, and think their happiness consists in continuing as they are.

Now I do not for an instant suspect, my brethren, that you are in the sound slumber of sin. This is a miserable state, which I should hope was, on the whole, the condition of few men, at least in a place like this. But, allowing this, yet there is great reason for fearing that very many of you are not wide awake: that though your dreams are disturbed, yet dreams they are; and that the view of religion which you think to be a true one, is not that vision of the Truth which you would see were your eyes open, but such a vague, defective, extravagant picture of it as a man sees when he is asleep. At all events, however this may be, it will be useful (please God) if you ask yourselves, one by one, the question, "*How do I know I am in the right way? How do I know that I have real faith, and am not in a dream?*"

The circumstances of these times render it very difficult to answer this question. When the world was against Christianity it was comparatively easy. But (in one sense) the world is now *for it*. I do not mean there are not turbulent lawless men, who would bring all things into confusion, if they could; who hate religion, and would overturn every established institution which proceeds from, or is connected with it. Doubtless there are very many such; but from such men religion has nothing to fear. The truth has ever flourished and strengthened under persecution. But what we have to fear is the opposite fact, that all the rank, and the station, and the intelligence, and the opulence of the country is professedly with religion. We have cause to fear from the very circumstance that the institutions of the country are based upon the acknowledgment of religion as true. Worthy of all honour are they who so based them! Miserable is the guilt which lies upon those who have attempted, and partly succeeded, in shaking that holy foundation! But it often happens that our most bitter, are not our most dangerous enemies; on the other hand, greatest blessings are the most serious temptations to the unwary. And our danger, at present, is this, that a man's having a general character for religion, reverencing the Gospel and professing it, and to a certain point obeying it, so fully promotes his temporal interests, that it is difficult for him to make out for himself whether he really acts on faith, or from a desire of this world's advantages. It is difficult to find *tests* which may bring home the truth to his mind, and probe his heart after the manner of Him who, from His throne above, tries it with an Almighty Wisdom. It can

scarcely be denied that attention to our religious duties is becoming a fashion among large portions of the community,—so large that, to many individuals, these portions are in fact *the world*. We are, every now and then, surprised to find persons to be in the observance of family prayer, of reading Scripture, or of the Lord's Supper, of whom we should not have expected beforehand such a profession of faith; or we hear them avowing the high evangelical truths of the New Testament, and countenancing those who maintain them. All this brings it about, that it is our interest in this world to profess to be Christ's disciples.

And further than this, it is necessary to remark, that, in spite of this general profession of zeal for the Gospel among all respectable persons at this day, nevertheless there is reason for fearing, that it is not altogether the real Gospel that they are zealous for. Doubtless we have cause to be thankful whenever we see persons earnest in the various ways I have mentioned. Yet, somehow, after all, there is reason for being dissatisfied with the character of the religion of the day; dissatisfied, first, because oftentimes these same persons are very inconsistent:—often, for instance, talk irreverently and profanely, ridicule or slight things sacred, speak against the Holy Church, or against the blessed Saints of early times, or even against the favoured servants of God, set before us in Scripture;—or *act* with the world and the worse sort of men, even when they do not speak like them; attend to them more than to the Ministers of God, or are very lukewarm, lax, and unscrupulous in matters of conduct, so much so that they seem hardly to go by principle, but by what is merely expedient and convenient. And then again, putting aside our judgment of these men as individuals, and thinking of them as well as we can, (which of course it is our duty to do,) yet, after all, taking merely the multitude of them as a symptom of a state of things, I own I am suspicious of any religion that is a people's religion, or an age's religion. Our Saviour says, "Narrow is the way." This, of course, must not be interpreted without great caution; yet surely the whole tenor of the Inspired Volume leads us to believe that His Truth will not be heartily received by the many, that it is against the current of human feeling and opinion, and the course of the world, and so far forth as it *is* received by a man, will be opposed by himself, i. e. by his old nature which remains about him, next by all others, so far forth as they have not received it. "The light shining in darkness" is the token of true religion; and, though doubtless there are seasons when a sudden enthusiasm arises in favour of the Truth, (as in the history of St. John the Baptist, in whose "light" the Jews "were

willing for a season to rejoice,"* so as even "to be baptized of him, confessing their sins;"†) yet such a popularity of the Truth is *but* sudden, comes at once and goes at once, has no regular growth, no abiding stay. It is error alone which grows and is received heartily on a large scale. St. Paul has set up his warning against our supposing Truth will ever be heartily accepted, whatever show there may be of a general profession of it, in his last Epistle, where he tells Timothy, among other sad prophecies, that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse."‡ Truth, indeed, has that power in it, that it forces men to profess it in words; but when they go on to act, instead of obeying *it*, they substitute some idol in the place of it. On these accounts, when there is much talk of religion in a country, and much congratulation that there is a general concern for it, a cautious mind will feel anxious lest some counterfeit be, in fact, honoured instead of it; lest it be the dream of man, rather than the verities of God's word, which has become popular, and lest the received form have no more truth in it than is just necessary to recommend it to the reason and conscience;—lest, in short, it be Satan transformed into an angel of light, rather than the Light itself, which is attracting followers.

If, then, this be a time, (which I suppose it is,) when a general profession of religion is thought respectable and right in the virtuous and orderly classes of the community, this circumstance should not diminish your anxiety about your own state before God, but rather (I may say) increase it; for two reasons, first, because you are in danger of doing right from motives of this world, next, because you may, perchance be cheated of the Truth, by some ingenuity which the world puts, like counterfeit coin, in the place of Truth.

Some, indeed, of those who now hear me, are in situations where they are almost shielded from the world's influence, whatever it is. There are persons so happily placed as to have religious superiors, who direct them to what is good only, and who are kind to them as well as pious towards God. This is their happiness, and they must thank God for the gift; but it is their temptation too. At least they are under one of the two temptations just mentioned; good behaviour is in their case not only a matter of duty, but of interest. If they obey God, they gain praise from men as well as from Him; so that it is very difficult for them to know whether they do right for conscience' sake, or for the world's sake. Thus, whether in private families, or in the world, in all the ranks of middle life, men lie under a considerable danger at this day, a more than ordinary danger, of self-deception, of being asleep while they think themselves awake.

* John v. 35.

† Matt. iii. 6.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 13.

How then shall we try ourselves? Can any tests be named which will bring certainty to our minds on the subject? No indisputable tests can be given. We cannot know for certain. We must beware of an impatience about knowing what our real state is. St. Paul himself did not know till the last days of his life, (as far as we know,) that he was one of God's elect who shall never perish. He said, "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified,"* i. e. though I am not conscious to myself of neglect of duty, yet am I not therefore confident of my acceptance. Judge nothing before the time. Accordingly he says in another place, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection lest, that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."† And yet though this absolute certainty of our election unto glory be unattainable, and the desire to obtain it an impatience which ill befits sinners, nevertheless a comfortable hope, a sober and subdued belief that God has pardoned and justified us for Christ's sake, (blessed be His name!) is attainable, according to St. John's words, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."‡ And the question is, how are we to attain to this, under the circumstances in which we are placed? In what does it consist?

Were we in a heathen land, (as I said just now,) it were easy to answer. The very profession of the Gospel would almost bring evidence of true faith, as far as we could have evidence; for such profession among Pagans is almost sure to involve persecution. Hence it is that the Epistles are so full of expressions of joy in the Lord Jesus, and in the exulting hope of salvation. Well might they be confident who had suffered for Christ. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."§ "Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."|| "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."¶ "Our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the suffering, so shall ye be also of the consolation."*** These and such like texts, belong to those only who have witnessed for the Truth like the early Christians. They are beyond us.

This is certain; yet since the nature of Christian obedience is the same in every age, it still brings with it, as it did then, an evidence of God's favour. We cannot indeed make ourselves as sure of our being in the number of God's true servants as the early Christians

* 1 Cor. iv. 4. † 1 Cor. ix. 27. ‡ 1 John iii. 21. § Rom. v. 3, 4.
 || Gal. vi. 17. ¶ 2 Cor. iv. 10. *** 2 Cor. i. 7.

were, yet we may possess our degree of certainty, and by the same kind of evidence, the evidence of *self-denial*. This was the great evidence which the first disciples gave, and which we can give still. Reflect upon our Saviour's plain declarations, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."* "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, he cannot be My disciple."† "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off . . . if thy foot offend thee, cut it off . . . if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out . . . it is better for thee to enter into life maimed . . . halt . . . with one eye, than to be cast into hell."‡

Now without attempting to explain perfectly such passages as these, which doubtless cannot be understood without a fulness of grace which is possessed by very few men, yet at least we learn thus much from them, that a rigorous self-denial is a chief duty, nay, that it may be considered the test whether we are Christ's disciples, whether we are living in a mere dream, which we mistake for Christian faith and obedience, or are really and truly awake, alive, living in the day, on our road heavenwards. The early Christians went through self-denials in their very profession of the Gospel; *what are our self-denials*, now that the profession of the Gospel is not a self-denial? In what sense do *we* fulfil the words of Christ? have we any distinct notion what is meant by the words "taking up our cross?" in what way are we acting, in which we should not act, supposing the Bible and the Church were unknown to this country, and religion, as existing among us, was *merely* a fashion of this world? What are we doing, which we have reason to trust is done for Christ's sake who bought us?

You know well enough that works are said to be the fruits and evidence of faith. That faith is said to be dead which has them not. Now what works have we to show of such a kind as to give us "confidence," so that we may "not be ashamed before Him at His coming?"§

In answering this question I observe, first of all, that, according to Scripture, the self-denial which is the test of our faith must be daily. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me."|| It is thus St. Luke records our

* Mark viii. 34. † Luke xiv. 26, 27. ‡ Mark ix. 43—47.

§ 1 John ii. 28. || Luke ix. 23.

Saviour's words. Accordingly, it seems that Christian obedience does not consist merely in a few occasional efforts, a few accidental good deeds, or certain seasons of repentance, prayer, and activity; a mistake, which minds of a certain class are very apt to fall into. This is the kind of obedience which constitutes what the world calls a great man, *i. e.* a man who has some noble points, and every now and then acts heroically, so as to astonish and subdue the minds of beholders, but who in private life has no abiding personal religion, who does not regulate his thoughts, words, and deeds, according to the law of God. Again, the word *daily* implies, that the self-denial which is pleasing to Christ consists in little things. This is plain, for opportunity for great self-denials does not come every day. Thus to take up the cross of Christ is no great action done once for all, it consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us.

If, then, a person asks how he is to know whether he is dreaming on in the world's slumber, or is really awake and alive unto God, let him first fix his mind upon some one or other of his besetting infirmities. Every one who is at all in the habit of examining himself, must be conscious of such within him. Many men have more than one, all of us have some one or other; and in resisting and overcoming such, self-denial has its first employment. One man is indolent and fond of amusement, another man is passionate or ill-tempered, another is vain, another has little control over his tongue; others are weak, and cannot resist the ridicule of thoughtless companions; others are tormented with bad passions, of which they are ashamed, yet are overcome. Now let every one consider what his weak point is; in that is his trial. His trial is not in those things which are easy to him, but in that one thing, in those several things, whatever they are, in which to do his duty is against his nature. Never think yourself safe because you do your duty in ninety-nine points: it is the hundredth which is to be the ground of your self-denial, which must evidence, or rather instance and realize your faith. It is in reference to this you must watch and pray; pray continually for God's grace to help you, and watch with fear and trembling lest you fall. Other men may not know what these weak points of your character are, they may mistake them. But you may know them; you may know them by their guesses and hints, and your own observation, and the light of the Spirit of God. And oh, that you may have strength to wrestle with them and overcome them! Oh, that you may have the wisdom to care little for the world's religion, or the praise you get from the world, and your agreement with what clever men, or powerful men, or many men, make the standard of religion, compared with the secret consciousness

that you are obeying God in little things as well as great, in the hundredth duty as well as in the ninety-nine! Oh, that you may (as it were) sweep the house diligently to discover what you lack of the *full* measure of obedience! for be quite sure, that this apparently small defect will influence your whole spirit and judgment in all things. Be quite sure that your judgment of persons, and of events, and of actions, and of doctrines, and your spirit towards God and man, your faith in the high truths of the Gospel, and your knowledge of your duty, all depend in a strange way on this strict endeavour to observe the whole law, on this self-denial in those little things in which obedience is a self-denial. Be not content with a warmth of faith carrying you over many obstacles even in your obedience, forcing you past the fear of men, and the usages of society, and the persuasions of interest; exult not in your experience of God's past mercies, and your assurance of what he has already done for your soul, if you are conscious you have neglected the one thing needful, the "one thing" which "thou lackest,"—daily self-denial.

But, besides this, there are other modes of self-denial to try your faith and sincerity, which it may be right just to mention. It may so happen that the sin you are most liable to, is not called forth every day. For instance: anger and passion are irresistible perhaps when they come upon you, but it is only at times that you are provoked, and then you are off your guard; so that the occasion is over, and you have failed, before you were well aware of its coming. It is right then almost to *find out* for yourself daily self-denials; and this because our Lord bids you take up your cross daily, and because it proves your earnestness, and because by doing so you strengthen your general power of self-mastery, and come to have such an habitual command of yourself, as will be a defence ready prepared when the season of temptation comes. Rise up then in the morning with the purpose that (please God) the day shall not pass without its self-denial, with a self-denial in innocent pleasures and tastes, if none occurs to mortify sin. Let your very rising from your bed be a self-denial; let your meals be self-denials. Determine to yield to others in things indifferent, to go out of your way in small matters to inconvenience yourself, (so that no direct duty suffers by it,) rather than you should not meet with your daily discipline. This was the Psalmist's method, who was, as it were, "punished all day long, and chastened every morning,"* It was St. Paul's method, who "kept under," or bruised "his body, and brought it into subjection."† This is one great end

* Psalm lxxiii. 14.

† 1 Cor. ix. 27.

fasting. A man says to himself, "How am I to know I am in earnest?" I would suggest to him, Make some sacrifice, do some distasteful thing, which you are not actually obliged to do, (so that it be lawful,) to bring home to your mind that in fact you do love your Saviour, that you do hate sin, that you do hate your sinful nature, that you have put aside the present world. Thus you will have an evidence (to a certain point) that you are not using mere words. It is easy to make professions, easy to say fine things in speech or in writing, easy to astonish men with truths which they do not know, and sentiments which rise above human nature. "But thou, O servant of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Let not your words run on; force every one of them into action as it goes, and thus, cleansing yourself from all pollution of the flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the fear of God. In dreams we sometimes move our arms to see if we are awake or not, and so we are awakened. This is the way to keep your heart awake also. Try yourself daily in little deeds, to prove that your faith is more than a deceit.

I am aware all this is a hard doctrine : hard to those even who assent to it, and can describe it most accurately. There are such imperfections, such inconsistencies in the heart and life of even the better sort of men, that continual repentance must ever go hand in hand with our endeavours to obey. Much we need the grace of Christ's blood to wash us from the guilt we daily incur : much need we the aid of His promised Spirit ! And surely He will grant all the riches of His mercy to His true servants : but as surely He will vouchsafe to none of us the power to believe in Him, and the blessedness of being one with Him, who are not as earnest in obeying Him as if salvation depended on themselves.

SERMON VI.

THE SPIRITUAL MIND.

1 COR. iv. 20. ?

“The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.”

How are we the better for being members of the Christian Church? This is a question which has *ever* claims on our attention; but it is right from time to time to examine our hearts with more than usual care, to try them by the standard of that divinely enlightened temper in the Church, and in the Saints, the work of the Holy Ghost, called by St. Paul “the spirit.” I ask then, how are we the better for being Christ’s disciples? what reason have we for thinking that our lives are very different from what they would have been if we had been heathens? Have we, in the words of the text, received the kingdom of God in word or in power? I will make some remarks in explanation of this question, which may (through God’s grace) assist you in answering it.

1. Now first, if we would form a just notion how far we are influenced by the power of the Gospel, we must evidently put aside every thing which we do merely in imitation of others, and not from religious principle. Not that we can actually separate our good words and works into two classes, and say, what is done from faith, and what is done only by accident, and in a random-way; but without being able to draw the line, it is quite evident that so very much of our apparent obedience to God arises from mere obedience to the world and its fashions; or rather, that it is so difficult to say what *is* done in the spirit of faith, as to lead us, on reflection, to be very much dissatisfied with ourselves, and quite out of conceit with our past lives. Let a person merely reflect on the number and variety of bad or foolish thoughts which he suffers, and dwells on in private, which he would be ashamed to put into words, and he will at once see, how very poor a test his outward demeanour in life is of his real holiness in the sight of God. Or again, let him consider the number of times he has attended public worship as a matter of course because others do, and without seriousness of mind; or the number of times he has found himself un-

equal to temptations when they came, which beforehand he and others made light of in conversation, blaming those perhaps who had been overcome by them, and he must own that his outward conduct shapes itself unconsciously to the manners of those with whom he lives, being acted upon by external impulses, apart from any right influence proceeding from the heart. Now, when I say this, am I condemning all that we do, without thinking expressly of the duty of obedience at the *very time* we are doing it? Far from it; a religious man, in proportion as obedience becomes more and more easy to him, *will* doubtless do his duty unconsciously. It will be *natural* to him to obey, and therefore he will *do it naturally*, i. e. without effort or deliberation. It is difficult things which we are obliged to think about before doing them. When we have mastered our hearts in any matter, (it is true,) we no more think of the duty while we obey, than we think how to walk when we walk, or by what rules to exercise any art which we have thoroughly acquired. *Separate acts* of faith aid us on while we are *unstable*. As we get strength, but one extended act of faith (so to call it) influences us all through the day, and our whole day is but one act of obedience also. There then is no minute distribution of our faith among our particular deeds. Our will runs parallel to God's will. This is the very privilege of confirmed Christians; and it is comparatively but a sordid way of serving God, to be thinking when we do a deed, "if I do not do this, I shall risk my salvation; or, if I do it, I have a chance of being saved;"—*comparatively* a grovelling way, for it is the best, the only way for sinners such as we are, to *begin* to serve God. Still as we grow in grace, we throw away childish things; then we are able to stand upright like grown men, without the props and aids which our infancy required. This is the noble manner of serving God, to do good without thinking about it, without any calculation or reasoning, from love of the good, and hatred of the evil;—though cautiously and with prayer and watching, yet so generously, that if we were suddenly asked why we so act, we could only reply "because it is our way," or "because Christ so acted;" so spontaneously as not to know so much that we *are* doing right, as that we are *not* doing wrong; I mean, with more of instinctive fear of sinning, than of minute and careful appreciation of the *degrees* of our obedience. Hence it is that the best men are ever the most humble; as for other reasons, so especially because they *are accustomed* to be religious. They surprise *others*, but not themselves; they surprise others at their very calmness and freedom from thought about themselves. This is to have a great mind, to have within us that princely heart of innocence of which David speaks. Common men see God at a distance; in their attempts to be religious,

they feebly guide themselves as by a distant light, and are obliged to calculate and search about for the path. But the long practised Christian, who, through God's mercy, has brought God's presence near to him, the elect of God, in whom the Blessed Spirit dwells, he does not look out of doors for the traces of God ; he is moved by God dwelling in him, and needs not but act on instinct. I do not say there is any man altogether such, for this is an angelic life ; but it is the state of mind to which vigorous prayer and watching tend.

How different is this high obedience from that random unawares way of doing right, which to so many men seems to constitute a religious life ! The excellent obedience I have been describing is obedience *on habit*. Now the obedience I condemn as untrue, may be called obedience *on custom*. The one is of the heart, the other of the lips ; the one is in power, the other in word ; the one cannot be acquired without much and constant vigilance, generally not without much pain and trouble ; the other is the result of a mere passive imitation of those whom we fall in with. Why need I describe what every man's experience bears witness to ? Why do children learn their mother tongue, and not a foreign language ? Do they think about it ? Are they better or worse for acquiring one language and not another ? Their character, of course, is just what it would have been otherwise. How then are we better or worse, if we have but in the same passive way admitted into our minds certain religious opinions ; and have but accustomed ourselves to the words and actions of the world around us ? Supposing we had never heard of the Gospel, should we not do just what we do, even in a heathen country, were the manners of the place, from one cause or another, as decent and outwardly religious ? This is the question we have to ask ourselves. And if we are conscious to ourselves that we are not greatly concerned about the question itself, and have no fears worth mentioning, of being in the wrong, and no anxiety to find what is right, is it not evident that we are living to the world, not to God, and that whatever virtue we may actually have, still the Gospel of Christ has come to us not in power, but in word only ?

I have now suggested one subject for consideration concerning our reception of the kingdom of God ; viz. to inquire whether we have received it more than *externally* ; but,

2. I will go on to affirm that we may have received it in a higher sense than in word merely, and yet in no real sense in *power* ; in other words, that our obedience may be in some sort religious, and yet hardly deserve the title of Christian. This may be at first sight a startling assertion. It may seem to some of us as if there were no difference between being religious and being Christian ; and that to insist on a

difference is to perplex people. But listen to me. Do you not think it possible for men to do their duty, i.e. be religious, in a heathen country? Doubtless it is. St. Peter says, that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.* Now are such persons, therefore, Christians? Certainly *not*. It would seem, then, it *is* possible to fear God and work righteousness, yet without being Christians: for, (if we would know the truth of it,) to be a Christian is to do this, and to do *much more* than this. Here, then, is a fresh subject for self-examination. Is it not the way of men to dwell with satisfaction on their good deeds, particularly when, for some reason or other, their conscience smites them? Or when they are led to the consideration of death, then they begin to turn in their minds how they shall acquit themselves before the judgment-seat. And then it is they feel a relief in being able to detect, in their past lives, any deeds which may be regarded in any sense religious. You may hear some persons comforting themselves that they never harmed any one; and that they have not given into an openly profligate and riotous life. Others are able to say more; they can speak of their honesty, their industry, or their general conscientiousness. We will say they have taken good care of their families; they have never defrauded or deceived any one; and they have a good name in the world; nay, they have in one sense lived in the fear of God. I will grant them this and more; yet possibly they are not altogether Christians in their obedience. I will grant that these virtuous and religious deeds are really fruits of faith, not external merely, done without thought, but proceeding from the heart. I will grant they are really praiseworthy, and, when a man from want of opportunity knows no more, really acceptable to God; yet they determine nothing about his having received the Gospel of Christ in power. Why? for the simple reason that they are *not enough*. A Christian's faith and obedience is *built* on all this, but is only *built on* it. It is not the same as it. To be Christians, surely it is not enough to be that which we are enjoined to be, and must be, even without Christ; not enough to be no better than good heathens; not enough to be, in some slight measure, just, honest, temperate, and religious. We must indeed be just, honest, temperate, and religious, before we can rise to Christian graces, and to *be* practised in justice and the like virtues is the way, the ordinary way, in which we receive the fulness of the kingdom of God; and, doubtless, any man who despises those who try to practise them, (I mean conscientious men, who notwithstanding have not yet clearly seen and welcomed the Gospel system,) and slightly calls them "mere

* Acts x. 3.

moral men" in disparagement, such a man knows not what spirit he is of, and had best take heed how he speaks against the workings of the inscrutable Spirit of God. I am not wishing to frighten these imperfect Christians, but to lead them on; to open their minds to the greatness of the work before them, to dissipate the meagre and carnal views in which the Gospel has come to them, to warn them that they must never be contented with themselves, or stand still and relax their efforts, but must go on *unto perfection*; that till they are much more than they are at present, they have received the kingdom of God in word, not in power; that they are not spiritual men, and can have no comfortable sense of Christ's presence in their souls; for to whom much is given, of him is much required.

What is it, then, that they lack? I will read several passages of Scripture which will make it plain. St. Paul says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Again: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." "The love of Christ constraineth us." "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye; and above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." Lastly, our Saviour's own memorable words, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."* Now it is plain that this is a very different mode of obedience from any which natural reason and conscience tell us of;—different *not in its nature*, but *in its excellence and peculiarity*. It is much more than honesty, justice, and temperance; and *this* is to be a Christian. Observe in what respect it is different from that lower degree of religion which we may possess without entering into the mind of the Gospel. First of all in its faith; which is placed, not simply in God, but in God as manifested in Christ, according to His own words, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me."† Next, we must adore Christ as our Lord and Master, and love Him as our most gracious Redeemer. We must have a deep sense of our guilt, and of the difficulty of securing Heaven; we must live as in

* 2 Cor. v. 14. 17. Gal. ii. 20. Col. iii. 12—16. Gal. iv. 6. Luke ix. 23.

† John xiv. 1.

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His presence, daily pleading His cross and passion, thinking of His holy commandments, imitating His sinless pattern, and depending on the gracious aids of His Spirit; that we may really and truly be servants of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose name we were baptized. Further, we must, for His sake, aim at a noble and unusual strictness of life, perfecting holiness in His fear, destroying our sins, mastering our whole soul, and bringing it into captivity to His law, denying ourselves lawful things, in order to do Him service, exercising a profound humility and an unbounded, never-failing love, giving away much of our substance in religious and charitable works, and discountenancing and shunning irreligious men. This is to be a Christian; a gift easily described, and in a few words, but attainable only with fear and much trembling; promised indeed, and in a measure accorded at once to every one who asks for it, but not secured till after many years, and never in this life fully realized. But be sure of this, that every one of us, who has had the opportunities of instruction and sufficient time, and yet does not in some good measure possess it, every one who, when death comes, has not gained his portion of that gift which it requires a course of years to gain, and which he might have gained, is in a peril so great and fearful, that I do not like to speak about it. As to the notion of a partial and ordinary fulfilment of the duties of honesty, industry, sobriety, and kindness, "availing"* him, it has no Scriptural encouragement. We must stand or fall by another and higher rule. We must have become what St. Paul calls "new creatures;"† that is, we must have lived and worshipped God as the redeemed of Jesus Christ, in all faith and humbleness of mind, in reverence for His word and ordinances, in thankfulness, in resignation, in mercifulness, gentleness, purity, patience, and love.

Now, considering the obligation of obedience which lies upon us Christians, in these two respects, first, as contrasted with a mere outward and nominal profession, and next contrasted with that more ordinary obedience which is required of those even who have not the Gospel, how evident is it, that we are far from the kingdom of God! Let each in his own conscience apply this to himself. I will grant he has *some* real Christian principle in his heart; but I wish him to observe *how little* that is likely to be. Here is a thought not to keep us from rejoicing in the Lord Christ, but to make us "rejoice with trembling,"‡ wait diligently on God, pray Him earnestly to teach us more of our duty, and to impress the love of it on our hearts, to enable us to obey both in that free spirit which can act right without reasoning and calculation, and yet with the caution of those who know their

* Gal. vi. 15.

† Gal. vi. 15.

‡ Ps. ii. 11.

salvation depends on obedience in little things, from love of the truth as manifested in Him who is the Living Truth come upon earth, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."*

With others we have no concern; we do not know what their opportunities are. There may be thousands in this populous land who never had the means of hearing Christ's voice fully, and in whom virtues short of evangelical will hereafter be accepted as the fruit of faith. Nor can we know the *hearts* of *any* men, or tell what is the degree in which they have improved their talents. It is enough to keep to ourselves. We dwell in the full light of the Gospel, and the full grace of the Sacraments. We ought to have the holiness of Apostles. There is no reason except our own wilful corruption, that we are not by this time walking in the steps of St. Paul or St. John, and following them as they followed Christ. What a thought is this! Do not cast it from you, my brethren, but take it to your homes, and may God give you grace to profit by it!

SERMON VII.

SINS OF IGNORANCE AND WEAKNESS.

HEBREWS X. 22.

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

AMONG the reasons which may be assigned for the observance of prayer at stated times, there is one which is very obvious, and yet perhaps is not so carefully remembered and acted upon as it should be. I mean the necessity of sinners cleansing themselves from time to time of the ever-accumulating guilt which loads their consciences. We are ever sinning; and though Christ has died once for all to release us from our penalty, yet we are not pardoned once for all, but according as, and whenever each of us supplicates for the gift. By the prayer of faith we appropriate it; but only for the time, not for ever. Guilt is again contracted, and must be again repented of and washed away. We cannot by one act of faith establish ourselves for ever after in the

* John xiv. 6.

favour of God. It is going beyond His will to be impatient for a final acquittal, when we are bid ask only for our *daily* bread. We are still so far in the condition of the Israelites; and though we do not offer sacrifice or observe the literal washings of the Law, yet we still require the periodical renewal of those blessings which were formerly conveyed in their degree by the Mosaic rites; and though we gain far more excellent gifts from God than the Jews did, and by more spiritual ordinances, yet means of approaching Him we still need, and continual means to keep us in the justification in which baptism first placed us. Of this the text reminds us. It is addressed to Christians, to the regenerate; yet so far from their regeneration having cleansed them once for all, they are bid ever to sprinkle the blood of Christ upon their consciences, and renew (as it were) their baptism, and so continually appear before the presence of Almighty God.

Let us now endeavour to realize a truth, which few of us will be disposed to dispute as far as words go.

1. First consider our present condition as shown us in Scripture. Christ has not changed this though He has died; it is as it was from the beginning,—I mean our actual state as men. We have Adam's nature in the same sense as if redemption had not come to the world. It *has* come to all the world, but the world is not changed thereby as a whole,—that change is not a work done and over in Christ. We are changed *one by one*; the race of man is what it ever was, guilty;—what it was before Christ came; with the same evil passions, the same slavish will. The history of redemption, if it is to be effectual, must begin from the beginning with every individual of us, and be carried on through our own life. It is not a work done ages before we were born. We cannot profit by the work of a Saviour, though He be the Blessed Son of God, so as to be saved thereby without our own working; for we are moral agents, we have a will of our own, and Christ must be formed in us, and turn us from darkness to light, if God's gracious purpose, fulfilled upon the cross, is to be in our case more than a name, an abused, wasted privilege. Thus the world, viewed as in God's sight, can never become wiser or more enlightened than it has been. We cannot mount upon the labours of our forefathers. We have the same nature that man ever had, and we must begin from the point man ever began from, and work out our salvation in the same slow, persevering manner.

(1.) When this is borne in mind, how important the Jewish law becomes to us Christians! important in itself, over and above all references contained in it to that Gospel which it introduced. To this day it fulfils its original purpose of impressing upon man his great guilt and feebleness. Those legal sacrifices and purifications which are now all

done away, are still evidence to us of a fact which the Gospel has not annulled,—our corruption. Let no one lightly pass over the Book of Leviticus, and say it only contains the ceremonial of a national law. Let no one study it merely with a critic's eye, satisfied with connecting it in a nicely-arranged system with the Gospel, as though it contained prophecy only. No; it speaks to us. Are we better than the Jews? is our nature less unbelieving, sensual, or proud, than theirs? Surely man is at all times the same being, as even the philosophers tell us. And if so, that minute ceremonial of the Law presents us with a picture of *our* daily life. It impressively testifies to our continual sinning, by suggesting that an expiation is needful in all the most trivial circumstances of our conduct; and that it is at our peril if we go on carelessly and thoughtlessly, trusting to our having been once accepted,—whether in baptism,—or (as we think) at a certain season of repentance, or (as we may fancy) at the very time of the death of Christ, (as if then the whole race of man were really and at once pardoned and exalted,)—or (worse still) if we profanely doubt that man has ever fallen under a curse, and trust idly in the mercy of God without a feeling of the true misery and infinite danger of sin.

Consider the ceremony observed on the great day of atonement, and you will see what was the sinfulness of the Israelites, and therefore of all mankind, in God's sight. The High Priest was taken to represent the holiest person of the whole world.* The nation itself was holy above the rest of the world; from it a holy tribe was selected; from the holy tribe, a holy family: and from that family, a holy person. This was the High Priest, who was thus set apart as the choice specimen of the whole human race; yet even he was not allowed, under pain of death, to approach even the mercy-seat of God, except once a year; nor then in his splendid robes, nor without sacrifices for the sins of himself and the people, the blood of which he carried with him into the holy place.

Or consider the sacrifices necessary according to the Law for sins of ignorance;† or again, for the mere touching any thing which the Law pronounced unclean, or for bodily disease,‡ and hence learn how sinful our ordinary thoughts and deeds must be, represented to us as they are, by these outward ceremonial transgressions. Not even their thanksgiving might the Israelites offer without an offering of blood to cleanse it; for our corruption is not merely in this act or that, but in our *nature*.

(2.) Next to pass from the Jewish law, you will observe that God tells us expressly in the history of the fall of Adam, what the legal ceremo-

* Vide Scott's *Essays*, p. 166.

† Levit. iv.

‡ Levit. v. 2. 6. xiv. 1—32.

nies implied: that it *is* our very nature which is sinful. Herein is the importance of the doctrine of original sin. It is very humbling, and as such the only true introduction to the preaching of the Gospel. Men can without trouble be brought to confess that they sin, i. e. that they commit sins. They know well enough they are not perfect; nay, that they do nothing in the best manner. But they do not like to be told that the race from which they proceed is degenerate. Even the indolent have pride here. They think they *can* do their duty, *only do not choose to do it*; they like to believe, (though strangely indeed, for they condemn themselves while they believe it,) they like to believe that they do not want assistance. A man must be far gone in degradation, and has lost even that false independence of mind which is often a substitute for real religion in leading to exertion, who, while living in sin, steadily and contentedly holds the opinion that he is born *for* sin. And much more do the industrious and active dislike to have it forced upon their minds, that, do what they will, they have the taint of corruption about all their doings and imaginings. We know how ashamed men are of being low born, or discredibly connected. This is the sort of shame forced upon every son of Adam. "Thy first father hath sinned:" this is the legend on our forehead which even the sign of the Cross does no more than blot out, leaving the mark of it. This is our shame: but I notice it here, not so much as a humbling thought, as (trusting you to be in your measure already humbled) with a view of pressing upon your consciences the necessity of appearing before God at stated seasons, in order to put aside the continually-renewed guilt of your nature. Who will dare go on day after day in neglect of earnest prayer, and the Holy Sacrament of the Atonement, while each day brings its own fearful burden, coming spontaneously (so to say,) springing from our very nature, but not get rid of without deliberate and direct acts of faith in the Great Sacrifice which has been set forth for its removal?

(3.) Further, look into your own souls, my brethren, and see if you cannot discern some part of the truth of the Scripture statement, which I have been trying to set before you. Recollect the bad thoughts of various kinds which come into your minds like darts; for these will be some evidence to you of the pollution and odiousness of your nature. True, they proceed from your adversary, the Devil; and the very circumstance of your experiencing them is in itself no proof of your being sinful, for even the Son of God, your Saviour, suffered from the temptation of them. But you will scarcely deny that they are received by you so freely and heartily, as to show that Satan tempts you through your nature, not against it. Again, let them be ever so external in

their first coming, do you not make them your own? Do you not detain them? or do you impatiently and indignantly shake them off? Even if you reject them, still do they not answer Satan's purpose in inflaming your mind at the instant, and so evidence that the matter of which it is composed is corruptible? Do you not, for instance, dwell on the thought of wealth and splendour till you covet these temporal blessings? or do you not suffer yourselves, though for a while, to be envious, or discontented, or angry, or vain, or impure, or proud? Ah! who can estimate the pollution hence, of one single day; the pollution of touching merely that dead body of sin which we put off indeed at our baptism, but which is tied about us while we live here, and is the means of our Enemy's assaults upon us! The taint of death is upon us, and surely we shall be stifled by the encompassing plague, unless God from day to day vouchsafes to make us clean.

2. Again, reflect on the *habits* of sin which we superadded to our evil nature before we turned to God. Here is another source of continual defilement. Instead of checking the bad principles within us, perhaps we indulged them for years; and they truly had their fruit unto death. Then Adam's sin increased, and multiplied itself within us; there was a change, but it was for the worse, not for the better; and the new nature we gained, far from being spiritual, was twofold more the child of hell than that with which we were born. So when, at length, we turned back into a better course, what a complicated work lay before us, to unmake ourselves! And however long we have laboured at it, still how much unconscious, unavoidable sin, the result of past transgression, is thrown out from our hearts day by day in the energy of our thinking and acting! Thus, through the sins of our youth, the power of the flesh is exerted against us, as a second creative principle of evil, aiding the malice of the Devil; Satan from without,—and our hearts from within, not passive merely and kindled by temptation, but *devising* evil, and speaking hard things against God with articulate voice, whether we will or not! Thus do past years rise up against us in present offences; gross inconsistencies show themselves in our character; and much need have we continually to implore God to forgive us our past transgressions, which still live in spite of our repentance, an act of themselves vigorously against our better mind, feebly influenced by that younger principle of faith, by which we fight against them.

3. Further, consider how many sins are involved in our obedience, I may say from the mere necessity of the case; that is, from not having that more vigorous and clear-sighted faith which would enable us accurately to discern and closely to follow the way of life. The case of

the Jews will exemplify what I mean. There were points of God's perfect Law which were not urged upon their acceptance, because it was foreseen that they would not be able to receive them as they really should be received, or to bring them home practically to their minds, and obey them simply and truly. We, Christians, with the same evil hearts as the Jews had, and most of us as unformed in holy practice, have, nevertheless, a perfect Law. We are bound to take and use all the precepts of the New Testament, though it stands to reason that many of them are, in matter of fact, quite above the comprehension of most of us. I am speaking of the actual state of the case, and will not go aside to ask why or under what circumstances God has been pleased to change His mode of dealing with man. But so it is; the Minister of Christ has to teach his sinful people a perfect obedience, and does not know how to set about it, or how to insist on any precept, so as to secure it from being misunderstood and misapplied. He sees men are acting upon low motives and views, and finds it impossible to raise their minds all at once, however clear his statements of the Truth. He feels that their good deeds might be done in a much better manner. There are numberless small circumstances about their mode of doing things which offend him, as implying poverty of faith, superstition, and contracted carnal notions. He is obliged to leave them to themselves with the hope that they may improve generally, and outgrow their present feebleness; and is often perplexed whether to praise or blame them. So is it with all of us, Ministers as well as people; it is so with the most advanced of Christians while in the body, and God sees it. What a source of continual deilement is here; not an omission merely of what might be added to our obedience, but a cause of positive offence in the eyes of Eternal purity! Who is not displeased when a man attempts some great work which is above his powers? and is it an excuse for his miserable performance that the work is above him? Now this is our case; we are bound to serve God with a perfect heart; an exalted work, a work for which our sins disable us. And when we attempt it, necessary as is our endeavour, how miserable must it appear in the eyes of the Angels! how pitiful our exhibition of ourselves! and withal, how sinful! since did we love God more from the heart, and had we served Him from our youth up, it would not have been with us as it is. Thus our very calling, as creatures, and again as elect children of God, and freemen in the Gospel, is by our sinfulness made our shame; for it puts us upon duties, and again upon the use of privileges which are above us. We attempt great things with the certainty of failing, and yet the necessity of attempting; and so *while* we attempt, need continual forgiveness for the *failure* of the attempt. We stand

before God as the Israelites at the passover of Hezekiah, who *desired* to serve God according to the Law, but could not do so accurately from lack of knowledge ; and we can but offer, through our Great High Priest, our sincerity and earnestness instead of exact obedience as Hezekiah did for them. “The good Lord pardon every one, that *prepareth his heart* to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary ;”* not performing i. e. the full duties of his calling.

And if such be the deficiencies, even of the established Christian, in his ordinary state, how great must be those of the penitent, who has but lately begun the service of God ? or of the young who are still within the influence of some unbridled imagination, or some domineering passion ! or of the heavily depressed spirit, whom Satan binds with the bonds of bodily ailment, or tosses to and fro in the tumult of doubt and indecision ! Alas, how is their conscience defiled with the thoughts, nay the words of every hour ! and how inexpressibly needful for them to relieve themselves of the evil that weighs upon their heart, by drawing near to God in full assurance of faith, and washing away their guilt in the Expiation which he has appointed !

What I have said is a call upon you, my brethren, in the first place, to daily private prayer. Next, it is a call upon you to join the public services of the Church, not only once a week, but whenever you have the opportunity ; knowing well that your Redeemer is especially present where two or three are gathered together. And, further, it is an especial call upon you to attend upon the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, in which blessed ordinance we really and truly gain that spiritual life which is the object of our daily prayers. The Body and Blood of Christ give power and efficacy to our daily faith and repentance. Take this view of the Lord’s Supper ; as the appointed means of obtaining the great blessings you need. The daily prayers of the Christian do but spring from and are referred back to, his attendance on it. Christ died once, long since : by communicating in His Sacrament, you renew the Lord’s death ; you bring into the midst of you that Sacrifice which took away the sins of the world : you appropriate the benefit of it, while you eat it under the elements of bread and wine. These outward signs are simply the means of a hidden grace. You do not expect to sustain your animal life without food ; be but as rational in spiritual concerns as you are in temporal. Look upon the consecrated elements as *necessary*, under God’s blessing, to your continual sanctification ; approach them as the salvation of your souls. Why is it more

* 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19.

strange that God should work through means for the health of the soul, than that He should ordain them for the preservation of bodily life, as He certainly has done? It is unbelief to think it matters not to your spiritual welfare whether you communicate or not. And it is worse than unbelief it is utter insensibility and obduracy, not to discern the state of death and corruption, into which, when left to yourselves, you are continually falling back. Rather thank God, that whereas you are sinners, instead of His leaving the mere general promise of life through His Son, which is addressed to all men, He has allowed you to take that promise to yourselves one by one, and thus gives you a humble hope that He has chosen you out of the world unto salvation.

Lastly, I have all along spoken as addressing true Christians, who are walking in the narrow way, and have hope of heaven. But these are the "few." Are there none here present of the "many" who walk in the broad way, and have upon their heads all their sins, from their baptism upwards? Rather, is it not probable that there are persons in this congregation, who, though mixed with the people of God, are really unforgiven, and if they now died, would die in their sins? First, let those who neglect the Holy Communion ask themselves whether this is not their condition; let them reflect whether among the signs by which it is given us to ascertain our state, there can be, to a man's own conscience, a more fearful one than to know he is omitting what is appointed as the ordinary means of his salvation. This is a plain test, about which no one can deceive himself. But next, let him have recourse to a more accurate search into his conscience; and ask himself whether (in the words of the text) he "draws near to God with a true heart," i. e. whether in spite of his prayers and religious services, there be not some secret, unresisted lusts within him, which make his devotion a mockery in the sight of God, and leave him in his sins; whether he be not thoughtless, and religious only as far as his friends make him seem so,—or light-minded and shallow in his religion, being ignorant of the depths of his guilt, and resting presumptuously in his own innocence (as he thinks it) and God's mercy;—whether he be not set upon gain, obeying God only so far as *His* service does not interfere with the service of mammon;—whether he be not harsh, evil-tempered,—unforgiving, unpitiful, or high-minded,—self-confident, and secure;—or whether he be not fond of the fashions of this world, which pass away, desirous of the friendship of the great, and of sharing in the refinements of polished society;—or whether he be not given up to some engrossing pursuit, which indisposes him to the thought of his God and Saviour.

Any *one* deliberate habit of sin incapacitates a man for receiving

gifts of the Gospel. All such states of mind as these are fearful symptoms of the *existence* of some such wilful sin in our hearts ; and in proportion as we trace these symptoms in our conduct, so must we dread, lest we be reprobates.

Let us then approach God all of us, confessing that we do not know ourselves ; that we are more guilty than we can possibly understand, and can but timidly hope, not confidently determine, that we have true faith. Let us take comfort in our being still in a state of grace, though we have no certain pledge of salvation. Let us beg Him to enlighten us, and comfort us ; to forgive us *all* our sins, teaching us those we do not see, and enabling us to overcome them.

SERMON VIII.

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS NOT GRIEVOUS.

1 JOHN v. 3.

"This is the love of God, that we Keep His commandments ; and His commandments are not grievous."

It must ever be borne in mind that it is a very great and arduous thing to attain heaven. "Many are called, few are chosen." "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." "Many will seek to enter in and shall not be able." "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."* On the other hand, it is evident to any one, who reads the New Testament with attention, that Christ and His Apostles speak of a religious life as something easy, pleasant, and comfortable. Thus, in the words I have taken for my text :—"This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments ; and His commandments are not grievous. In like manner our Saviour says, "Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest . . . My yoke is easy and my burden is light."† Solomon also, in the Old Testament, speaks in the same way of true wisdom :—"Her ways are ways

* Matt. xxii. 14. vii. 14. Luke xiii. 24. xiv. 26.

† Matt. xi. 28—30.

of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.

. . . When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid ; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet."* Again, we read in the prophet Micah : " What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?"† as if it were a little and an easy thing so to do.

Now I will attempt to show *how* it is that these apparently opposite declarations of Christ and His Prophets and Apostles are fulfilled to us. For it may be objected by inconsiderate persons that we are (if I may so express it) *hardly treated* ; being invited to come to Christ and receive His light yoke, promised an easy and happy life, the joy of a good conscience, the assurance of pardon, and the hope of Heaven ; and then, on the other hand, when we actually come, as it were, rudely repulsed, frightened, reduced to despair by severe requisitions and evil forbodings. Such is the objection,—not which any *Christian* would bring forward ; for we, my brethren, know too much of the love of our Master and only Saviour in dying for us, seriously to entertain for an instant any such complaint. We have at least faith enough for this, (and it does not require a great deal,) viz. to believe that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is not " yea and nay, but in Him is yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us."‡ It is for the very reason that none of us can seriously put the objection, that I allow myself to state it strongly ; to urge it being in a Christian's judgment absurd, even more than it would be wicked. But though none of *us* really feel as an objection to the Gospel, this difference of view under which it is presented to us, or even as a difficulty, still it may be right (in order to our edification) that we should see how these two views of it are reconciled. We must understand *how* it is *both* severe *and* indulgent in its commands, and both arduous and easy in its obedience, in order that we may understand it at all.

" His commandments are not grievous," says the text. How is this ?—I will give one answer out of several which might be given.

Now it must be admitted, first of all, as matter of fact, that they *are* grievous to the great mass of Christians. I have no wish to disguise a fact which we do not need the Bible to inform us of, but which common experience attests. Doubtless even those common elementary duties, of which the prophet speaks, " doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God," are to most men *grievous*.

Accordingly, men of worldly minds, finding the true way of life unpleasant to walk in, have attempted to find out other and easier roads ;

* Prov. iii. 17—24.

† Micah. vi. 8.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 19, 20.

and have been accustomed to argue, that there must be another way which suits them better than that which religious men walk in, for the very reason that Scripture declares that Christ's commandments are *not* grievous. I mean, you will meet with persons who say, "After all it is not to be supposed that a strict religious life is so necessary as is told us in church; else how should any one be saved? nay, and Christ assures us His yoke is easy. Doubtless we shall fare well enough, though we are not so earnest in the observance of our duties as we might be; though we are not regular in our attendance at public worship; though we do not honour Christ's Ministers and reverence His Church as much as some men do; though we do not labour to know God's will, to deny ourselves, and to live to His glory, as entirely as the strict letter of Scripture enjoins." Some men have gone so far as boldly to say, "God will not condemn a man merely for taking a little pleasure;" by which they mean, leading an irreligious and profligate life. And many there are who virtually maintain that we may live to the world, so that we do so decently, and yet live to God; arguing that this world's blessings are given us by God, and therefore may lawfully be used;—that to use lawfully is to use moderately and thankfully;—that it is wrong to take gloomy views, and right to be innocently cheerful, and so on; which is all very true thus stated, did they not apply it unfairly, and call that use of the world *moderate*, and *innocent*, which the Apostles would call being *conformed* to the world, and serving mammon instead of God.

And thus, before showing you what is meant by Christ's commandments not being grievous, I have said what is *not* meant by it. It is *not* meant that Christ dispenses with strict religious obedience; the whole language of Scripture is against such a notion. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."* "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."† Whatever is meant by Christ's yoke being easy, Christ does not encourage sin. And again, whatever is meant, still I repeat, as a matter of fact, most men find it not easy. So far must not be disputed. Now then let us proceed, in spite of this admission, to consider how He fulfils His engagements to us, that His ways are ways of pleasantness.

1. Now, supposing some superior promised you any gift in a particular way, and you did not follow his directions, would *he* have broken his promise, or you have voluntarily excluded yourselves from the advantage? Evidently you would have brought about your own loss; you might, indeed, think his offer not worth accepting, burdened (as it was) with a condition annexed to it, still you could in no propriety say that

* Matt. v. 19.

† James ii. 10.

he failed in his engagement. Now when Scripture promises us that his commandments shall be easy, it couples the promise with the injunction that we should seek God *early*. "I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me *early* shall find Me."* Again: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."† These are Solomon's words; and if you require our Lord's own authority, attend to His direction about the children: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of *such* is the kingdom of God."‡ Youth is the time of covenant with us, when He first gives us His Spirit; first giving *then*, that we may *then* forthwith begin our return of obedience to Him; not then giving it, that we may delay our thank-offering for twenty, thirty, or fifty years! Now it is obvious that obedience to God's commandments is ever easy and almost without effort to those who begin to serve Him from the beginning of their days; whereas, those who wait a while, find it grievous in proportion to their delay.

For consider how gently God leads us on in our early years, and how very gradually He opens upon us the complicated duties of life. A child at first has hardly anything to do but to obey his parents; of God he knows just as much as they are able to tell him, and he is not equal to many thoughts either about Him or about the world. He is almost passive in their hands who gave him life; and, though he has those latent instincts about good and evil, truth and falsehood, which all men have, he does not know enough, he has not had experience enough, from the contact of external objects, to elicit into form and action those innate principles of conscience, or make himself conscious of the existence of them.

And, while on the one hand his range of duty is very confined, observe how he is assisted in performing it. First, he has no bad habits to hinder the suggestions of his conscience; indolence, pride, ill-temper, do not then act as they afterwards act, when the mind has accustomed itself to disobedience, as stubborn, deep-seated impediments in the way of duty. To obey requires an effort, of course; but an effort like the bodily effort of the child's rising from the ground when he has fallen on it; not the effort of shaking off drowsy sleep; not the effort (far less) of violent bodily exertion in a time of sickness and long weakness: and the first effort made, obedience on a second trial will be easier than before, till at length it will be easier to obey than not to obey. A good habit will be formed, where otherwise a bad habit would have been formed. Thus the child, we are supposing, would begin to have a character; no longer influenced by every temptation to anger, discontent, fear, and obstinacy in the same way as before; but with something of firm principle in his heart to repel them in a defensive

* Prov. viii. 17.

† Eccles. xii. 1.

‡ Mark x. 14.

way, as a shield repels darts. In the mean time the circle of his duties would enlarge ; and, though for a time the issue of his trial would be doubtful to those who (as the Angels) could see it, yet, should he, as a child, consistently pursue this easy course for a few years, it may be, his ultimate salvation would be actually secured, and might be predicted by those who could see his heart, though he would not know it himself. Doubtless new trials would come on him ; bad passions, which he had not formed a conception of, would assail him ; but a soul thus born of God, in St. John's words, " sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."* " His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."† And so he would grow up to man's estate, his duties at length attaining their full range, and his soul being completed in all its parts for the due performance of them. This *might* be the blessed condition of every one of us, did we but follow from infancy what we know to be right ; and in Christ's early life, (if we may dare to speak of Him in connexion with ourselves,) it *was* fulfilled while He increased day by day sinlessly in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man. But my present object of speaking of this gradual growth of holiness in the soul, is, (not to show what we might be, had we the heart to obey God,) but to show *how easy* obedience would in that case be to us ; consisting, as it would, in no irksome ceremonies no painful bodily discipline, but in the free-will offerings of the *heart*, of the heart which had been gradually, and by very slight occasional efforts, trained to love what God and our conscience approve.

Thus Christ's commandments, viewed *as He enjoins them on us*, are not grievous. They *would* be grievous if put upon us all at once ; but they are *not* heaped on us, according to *His* order of dispensing them, which goes upon a harmonious and considerate plan ; by little and little, first one duty, then another, then both, and so on. Moreover, they come upon us, while the safeguard of virtuous principle is forming naturally and gradually in our minds by our very deeds of obedience, and is following them as their reward. Now, if men will not take their duties in Christ's order, but are determined to delay obedience, with the intention of setting about their duty some day or other, and then making up for past time, is it wonderful that they find it grievous and difficult to perform ? that they are overwhelmed with the arrears (so to say) of their great work, that they are entangled and stumble amid the intricacies of the Divine system which has progressively enlarged upon them ? And is Christ under obligation to stop that system, to recast His providence, to take these men out of their due place in the Church, to save

* 1 John v. 18.

† 1 John iii. 9.

them from the wheels that are crushing them, and to put them back again into some simple and more childish state of trial, where (though they cannot have less to unlearn) they, at least, may for a time have less to do?

2. All this being granted, it still may be objected, since (as I have allowed) the commandments of God *are* grievous to the generality of men, where is the use of saying what men *ought* to be, when we know what they *are*? and how is it fulfilling a promise that His commandments *shall not* be grievous, by informing us that they *ought not* to be? It is one thing to say that the Law is in itself holy, just, and good, and quite a different thing to declare it is not *grievous* to sinful man.

In answering this question, I fully admit that our Saviour spoke of man *as he is*, as a sinner, when He said His yoke should be easy to him. Certainly he came not to call righteous men, but sinners. Doubtless we are in a very different state from that of Adam before his fall; and doubtless, in spite of this, St. John says that even to fallen man His commandments are not grievous. On the other hand I grant, that if man *cannot* obey God, obedience *must* be grievous; and I grant too (of course) that man by nature *cannot* obey God. But observe, nothing has here been said, nor by St. John in the text, of man as by nature born in sin; but of man as a *child of grace*, as Christ's purchased possession, who goes *before* us with His mercy, puts the blessing first, and then adds the command; regenerates us and *then* bids us obey. Christ bids us do nothing that we cannot do. He repairs the fault of our nature, even before it manifests itself in act. He cleanses us from original sin, and rescues us from the wrath of God by the sacrament of baptism. He gives us the gift of His Spirit, and then He says, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" and is *this* grievous?

When, then, men allege their bad nature as an excuse for their *dislike* of God's commandments, if, indeed, they are heathens, let them be heard, and an answer may be given to them even as such. But with heathens we are not now concerned. These men make their complaint as *Christians*, and as Christians they are most unreasonable in making it; God having provided a remedy for their natural incapacity in the gift of His Spirit. Hear St. Paul's words, "If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."*

* Rom. v. 15—21.

And there *are* persons, let it never be forgotten, who have so followed God's leading providence from their youth up, that to them His commandments not only are not grievous, but never have been : and that there *are* such, is the condemnation of all who are not such. They have been brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;"* and they now live in the love and "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."† Such are they whom our Saviour speaks of, as "just persons which need no repentance."‡ Not that they will give that account of themselves, for they are full well conscious in their own hearts of sins innumerable, and habitual infirmity. Still, in spite of stumblings and falls in their spiritual course, they have on the whole persevered. As children they served God on the whole ; they disobeyed, but they recovered their lost ground ; they sought God and were accepted. Perhaps their young faith gave way for a time altogether ; still they contrived with keen repentance, and strong disgust at sin, and earnest prayers, to make up for lost time, and keep pace with the course of God's providence. Thus they have *walked* with God, not indeed step by step with Him ; never before Him, often loitering, stumbling, falling to sleep ; yet in turn starting and "*making haste* to keep His commandments," "running and prolonging not the time." Thus they proceed, not, however, of themselves, but as upheld by His right hand, and guiding their steps by His Word ; and though they have nothing to boast of, and know their own unworthiness, still they are witnesses of Christ to all men, as showing what man *can* become, and what all Christians ought to be ; and at the last day, being found meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, they "condemn the world" as Noah did, and become "heirs of the righteousness which is by faith," according to the saying, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."§

And now, to what do the remarks I have been making tend, but to this ?—to humble every one of us. For, however faithfully we have obeyed God, and however early we began to do so, surely we might have begun sooner than we did, and might have served Him more heartily. We cannot but be conscious of this. Individuals among us may be more or less guilty, as the case may be ; but the best and the worst among us here assembled, may well unite themselves together so far as this, to confess they "have erred and strayed from God's ways like lost sheep," "have followed *too much* the devices and desires of their own hearts," have "no health" in themselves as being "miserable offenders." Some of us may be nearer Heaven, some further from it : some may have a good hope of salvation, and others, (God forbid ! but it may

* Eph. vi. 4.

† Phil. iv. 7.

‡ Luke xv.

§ 1 John v. 4.

he,) others *no* present hope. Still let us unite now as one body in confession, (to the better part of us such confession will be more welcome, and to the worse it is more needful,) in confessing ourselves sinners, deserving God's anger, and having no hope except "according to His promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord." He who first regenerated us and then gave his commandments, and then was so ungratefully deserted by us, He again it is that must pardon and quicken us after our accumulated guilt, if we are to be pardoned. Let us then trace back in memory (as far as we can) our early years; what we were when five years old, when ten, when fifteen, when twenty! what our state would have been as far as we can guess it, had God taken us to our account at any age before the present. I will not ask how it would go with us, were we *now* taken; we will suppose the best.

Let each of us (I say) reflect upon his own most gross and persevering neglect of God at various seasons of his past life. How considerate He has been to us! How did He shield us from temptation! how did He open His will gradually upon us, as we might be able to bear it! * how has He done all things well, so that the spiritual work might go on calmly, safely, surely! How did he lead us on, duty by duty, as if step by step upwards, by the easy rounds of that ladder whose top reaches to Heaven! Yet how did we thrust ourselves into temptation! how did we refuse to come to Him that we might have life! how did we daringly sin against light! And what was the consequence? that our work grew beyond our strength; or rather that our strength grew less as our duties increased: till at length we gave up obedience in despair. And yet then He still tarried and was merciful unto us; He turned and looked upon us to bring us into repentance; and we for a while were moved. Yet, even then our wayward hearts could not keep up to their own resolves: letting go again the heat which Christ gave them, as if made of stone, and not of living flesh. What could have been done more to His vineyard, that He hath not done in it?† "O my people (He seems to say to us) what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; . . . what doth the Lord require of thee, but justice, mercy, and humbleness of mind?"‡ He hath showed us what is good. He has borne and carried us in His bosom, "lest at any time we should dash our foot against a stone"§ He shed His Holy Spirit upon us that we might love him. And "*this* is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." Why, then,

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

† Micah vi. 3—8.

‡ Isaiah v. 4.

§ Psalm xci. 12.

have they been grievous to us? Why have we erred from His ways, and hardened our hearts from His fear? Why do we this day stand ashamed, yea, even confounded, because we bear the reproach of our youth?

Let us then turn to the Lord, while yet we may. Difficult it will be, in proportion to the distance we have departed from Him. Since every one might have done more than he has done, every one has suffered losses he never can make up. We have made His commands grievous to us: we must bear it; let us not attempt to explain them away because they *are* grievous. We never can wash out the stains of sin. God may forgive, but the sin has had its work, and its memento is set up in the soul. God sees it there. Earnest obedience and prayer will gradually remove it. Still, what miserable loss of time is it in our brief life, to be merely undoing (as has become necessary) the evils which we have done, instead of going on to perfection! If by God's grace we shall be able in a measure to sanctify ourselves in spite of our former sins, yet how much more *should* we have attained, had we always been engaged in His service!

These are bitter and humbling thoughts, but they are good thoughts if they lead us to repentance. And this leads me to one more observation, with which I conclude.

If any one who hears me is at present moved by what I have said, and feels the remorse and shame of a bad conscience, and forms any sudden good resolution let him take heed to follow it up at once by *acting upon it*. I earnestly beseech him so to do. For this reason;—because if he does not, he is beginning a habit of inattention and insensibility. God *moves* us in order to make the beginning of duty *easy*. If we do not attend, He *ceases* to move us. Any of you, my brethren, who will not take advantage of this considerate providence, if you will not turn to God now with a *warm heart*, you will hereafter be obliged to do so, (if you do so at all,) *with a cold heart*,—which is much harder. God keep you from this!

SERMON IX.

THE RELIGIOUS USE OF EXCITED FEELINGS.

LUKE viii. 38, 39.

"The man out of whom the devils were departed, besought Him that he might be with Him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee."

It is very natural in the man whom our Lord had set free from this dreadful visitation, to wish to continue with Him. Doubtless his mind was transported with joy and gratitude; whatever consciousness he might possess of his real wretchedness while the devil tormented him, now, at least, on recovering his reason, he would understand that he had been in a very miserable state, and he would feel all the lightness of spirits and activity of mind, which attend any release from suffering or constraint. Under these circumstances he would imagine himself to be in a new world, so to say; he had found deliverance; and what was more, a Deliverer too, who stood before him. And whether from a wish to be ever in His divine presence ministering to Him, or from a fear lest Satan would return, nay, with seven-fold power, did he lose sight of Christ, or from an undefined notion that all his duties and hopes were now changed, that his former pursuits were unworthy of him, and that he must follow up some grand plan of action with the new ardour he felt glowing within him; from one or the other, or all of these feelings combined, he besought our Lord that he might be with Him. Christ imposed this attendance as a command on others; He bade, for instance, the young ruler follow Him; but He gives opposite commands, according to our tempers and likings; He thwarts us, that He may try our faith. In the case before us He suffered not, what at other times He had bidden. "Return to thine own house," He said, or as it is in St. Mark's Gospel, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." He directed the current of his newly awakened feelings into another channel; as if He said, "Lovest thou me? this do; return home to your old occupations and pursuits. You did them ill before,

* Mark, v. 19.

you lived to the world ; do them well now, live to Me. Do your duties little as well as great, heartily for My sake ; go among your friends ; show them what God hath done for thee ; be an example to them, and teach them.”* And further, as He said on another occasion, Show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them ?”†—show forth that greater light and truer love which you now possess in a conscientious, consistent obedience to all the ordinances and rites of your religion.

Now from this account of the restored demoniac, his request, and our Lord’s denial of it, a lesson may be drawn for the use of those who, having neglected religion in early youth, at length begin to have serious thoughts, try to repent, and wish to serve God better than hitherto, though they do not well know how to set about it. We know that God’s commandments are pleasant and “rejoice the heart,” if we accept them in the order and manner in which he puts them upon us ; that Christ’s yoke, as he has promised, is (on the whole) very easy, if we submit to it betimes ; that the practice of religion is full of comfort to those, who being first baptized with the Spirit of grace, receive thankfully His influences as their minds open, inasmuch as they are gradually and almost without sensible effort on their part, imbued in all their heart, soul, and strength, with that true heavenly life which will last for ever.

But here the question meets us, “But what are those to do who *have* neglected to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and so have lost all claim on Christ’s promise, that His yoke shall be easy, and His commandments not grievous ? I answer, that of course they must not be surprised if obedience is with them a laborious up-hill work all their days ; nay, as having been “once enlightened, and partaken of the Holy Ghost” in baptism, they would have no right to complain, even though “it were impossible for them to renew themselves again unto repentance.” But God is more merciful than this just severity ; merciful not only above our deservings, but even above His own promises. Even for those who have neglected Him when young, He has found some sort of remedy, (if they will avail themselves of it,) of the difficulties in the way of obedience which they have brought upon themselves by sinning ; and what this remedy is, and how it is to be used, I proceed to describe in connexion with the account in the text.

The help I speak of, is the excited feeling with which repentance is at first attended. True it is, that all the passionate emotion, or fine sensibility, which ever man displayed, will never by itself make us change our ways, and do our duty. Impassioned thoughts, high aspi-

* 1 Col. iii. 17.

† Matt. viii. 4.

rations, sublime imaginings, have no strength in them. They can no more make a man obey consistently, than they can move mountains. If any man truly repent, it must be in consequence, not of these, but of a settled conviction of his guilt, and a deliberate resolution to leave his sins and serve God. Conscience, and Reason in subjection to Conscience, *these* are those powerful instruments (under grace) which change a man. But you will observe, that though Conscience and Reason lead us to resolve on and attempt a new life, they cannot at once make us *love* it. It is long practice and habit which makes us love religion; and in the beginning, obedience, doubtless, is very grievous to habitual sinners. Here then is the use of those earnest, ardent feelings of which I just spoke, and which attend the first exercise of conscience and reason,—to take away from the *beginnings* of obedience its *grievousness*, to give us an impulse which may carry us over the first obstacles, and send us on our way rejoicing. Not as if all this excitement of mind were to last, (which cannot be,) but it will do its office in thus setting us off; and then will leave us to the more sober and higher comfort resulting from that real *love* for religion, which obedience itself will have by that time begun to form in us, and will gradually go on to perfect.

Now it is well to understand this fully, for it is often mistaken. When sinners are led to think seriously, stronger feelings generally precede or attend their reflections about themselves. Some book they have read, some conversation of a friend, some remarks they have heard made in church, or some occurrence or misfortune, rouses them. Or, on the other hand, if in any more calm and deliberate manner they have commenced their self-examination, yet in a little time the very view of their manifold sins, of their guilt, and their heinous ingratitude to their God and Saviour, breaking upon them, and being new to them, strikes, and astonishes, and then agitates them. Here, then, let them know the *intention* of all this excitement of mind in the order of Divine providence. It will not continue; it arises from the novelty of the view presented to them. As they become accustomed to religious contemplations, it will wear away. It is not religion itself, though it is accidentally connected with it, and may be made a means of leading them into a sound religious course of life. It is graciously intended to be a set-off in their case against the first distastefulness and pain of doing their duty; it must be used as such, or it will be of no use at all, or worse than useless. My brethren, bear this in mind, (and I may say this generally, not confining myself to the excitement which attends repentance only, but all that natural emotion prompting us to do good, which we involuntarily feel on various occasions,) it is given you in

order that you may find it easy to obey at starting. Therefore obey *promptly*; make use of it whilst it lasts; it waits for no man. Do you feel natural pity towards some case which reasonably demands your charity? or the impulse of generosity in a case where you are called to act a manly self-denying part? Whatever the emotion may be, whether these or any other, do not imagine you will always feel it. Whether you avail yourselves of it or not, still any how you will feel less and less, and, as life goes on, at last will not feel such sudden vehement excitement at all. But this is the difference between seizing or letting slip these opportunities;—if you avail yourselves of them for acting, and yield to the impulse so far as conscience tells you to do, you have made a leap (so to say) across a gulf, to which your ordinary strength is not equal; you will have secured the beginning of obedience, and the further steps in the course are (generally speaking) far easier than those which first determine its direction. And so, to return to the case of those who feel any accidental remorse for their sins violently exerting itself in their hearts, I say to them, Do not loiter; go home to your friends, and repent in *deeds* of righteousness and love; hasten to commit yourselves to certain definite *acts* of obedience. Doing is at a far greater distance from intending to do than you at first sight imagine. Join them together while you can; you will be depositing your good feelings into you heart itself by thus making them influence your conduct; and they will “spring up into fruit.” This was the conduct of the conscience-stricken Corinthians, as described by St. Paul; who rejoiced “not that they were made *sorry*, (not that their feelings merely were moved,) but that they sorrowed *to change of mind* . . . For godly sorrow (he continues) worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”*

But now let us ask how do men usually conduct themselves in matter of fact, when under visitings of conscience for their past sinful lives? They are far from thus acting. They look upon the turbid zeal and feverish devotion which attend their repentance, not as in part the corrupt offspring of their own previously corrupt state of mind, and partly a gracious natural provision, only temporary to encourage them to set about their reformation, but as the substance and real excellence of religion. They think that to be thus agitated is to be religious; they indulge themselves in these warm feelings for their own sake, resting in them as if they were then engaged in a religious exercise, and boasting of them as if they were an evidence of their own exalted spiritual state; not *using them*, (the one only thing they ought to do,)

* 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.

using them as an incitement to *deeds* of love, mercy, truth, meekness, holiness. After they have indulged this luxury of feeling for some time, the excitement of course ceases; they do not feel as they did before. This (I have said) might have been anticipated, but they do not understand it so. See then their unsatisfactory state. They have lost an opportunity of overcoming the first difficulties of active obedience, and so of fixing their conduct and character, which may never occur again. This is one great misfortune; but more than this, what a perplexity they have involved themselves in! Their warmth of feeling is gradually dying away. Now they think that *in it* true religion consists; therefore they believe that they are losing their faith, and falling into sin again.

And this, alas, is too often the case: they *do* fall away, for they have no root in themselves. Having neglected to turn their feelings into principles by acting upon them, they have no inward strength to overcome the temptation to live as the world, which continually assails them. Their minds have been acted upon as water by the wind, which raises waves for a time, then ceasing, leaves the water to subside into its former stagnant state. The precious opportunity of improvement has been lost; and the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*

But let us suppose, that when they first detect this declension (as they consider it) they are alarmed, and look around for a means of recovering themselves. What do they do? Do they at once begin those practices of lowly obedience which alone can prove them to be Christ's at the last day? Such as the government of their tempers, the regulation of their time, self-denying charity, truth-telling sobriety. Far from it; they despise this plain obedience to God as a mere unenlightened morality, as they call it, and they seek for potent stimulants to continue their minds in that state of excitement which they have been taught to consider the essence of a religious life, and which they cannot produce by the means which before excited them. They have recourse to new doctrines, or follow strange teachers, in order that they may dream on in this their artificial devotion, and may avoid that conviction which is likely sooner or later to burst upon them, that emotion and passion are in our power indeed to repress, but not to *excite*; that there is a limit to the tumults and swellings of the heart, foster them as we will; and, when that time comes, the poor, mis-used soul is left exhausted and resourceless. Instances are not rare in the world of that fearful, ultimate state of hard-heartedness which then succeeds;

* 2 Pct. ii. 20.

when the miserable sinner believes indeed as the devils may, yet not even with the devils' trembling, but sins on without fear.

Others, again, there are, who, when their feelings fall off in strength and fervency, are led to despond; and so are brought down to a superstitious piety, when they might have been rejoicing in cheerful obedience. These are the better sort, who, having something of true religious principle in their hearts, still are misled in part, so far, that is, as to rest in their feelings as tests of holiness; therefore they are distressed and alarmed at their own tranquillity, which they think a bad sign, and, being dispirited, lose time, others outstripping them in the race.

And others might be mentioned who are led by this same first eagerness and zeal into a different error. The restored sufferer in the text wished to be with Christ. Now it is plain all these who indulge themselves in the false devotion I have been describing, may be said to be desirous of thus keeping themselves in Christ's immediate sight, instead of returning to their own home, as He would have them, that is, to the common duties of life; and they do this, some from weakness of faith, as if He could not bless them, and keep them in the way of grace, though they pursued their worldly callings; others from an ill-directed love of Him. But there are others, I say, who when they are awakened to a sense of religion, forthwith despise their former condition altogether, as beneath them; and think that they are now called to some high and singular office in the Church of Christ. These mistake their duty, as those already described neglect it; they do not waste their time in mere good thoughts and good words, as the others, but they are impetuously led on to *wrong acts*, and that from the influence of those same strong emotions which they have not learned to use aright or direct to their proper end. But to speak of these now at any length, would be beside my subject.

To conclude;—let me repeat and urge upon you, my brethren, the lesson which I have deduced from the narrative of which the text forms part. Your Saviour calls you from infancy to serve Him, and has arranged all things well, so that his service shall be perfect freedom. Blessed above all men are they who heard His call then, and served Him day by day, as their strength to obey increased. But, further, are you conscious that you have more or less neglected this gracious opportunity, and suffered yourselves to be tormented by Satan? See, He calls you a second time; He calls you by your roused affections once and again, ere He leave you finally. He brings you back for the time (as it were) to a second youth by the urgent persuasions of excited fear, gratitude, love, and hope. He again places you for an instant in that

early, unformed state of nature when habit and character were not. He takes you out of yourselves, robbing sin for a season of its indwelling hold upon you. Let not those visitings pass away "as the morning cloud and the early dew."* Surely, you must still have occasional compunctions of conscience for your neglect of Him. Your sin stares you in the face; your ingratitude to God affects you. Follow on to know the Lord, and to secure His favour by *acting* upon these impulses; by them He pleads with you, as well as by your conscience; they are the instruments of his Spirit, stirring you up to seek your true peace. Nor be surprised, though you obey them, that they die away; they have done their office, and, if they die, it is but as blossom changes into the fruit, which is far better. They *must* die. Perhaps you will have to labour in darkness afterwards, out of your Saviour's sight, in the home of your own thoughts, surrounded by sights of this world, and showing forth His praise among those who are cold-hearted. Still be quite sure that resolute, consistent obedience, though unattended with high transport and warm emotion, is far more acceptable to Him than all those passionate longings to live in His sight, which look more like religion to the uninstructed. At the very best these latter are but the graceful beginnings of obedience, graceful and becoming in children, but in grown spiritual men indecorous, as the sports of boyhood would be in advanced years. Learn to live by faith, which is a calm, deliberate, rational principle, full of peace and comfort, and sees Christ, and rejoices in Him, though sent away from His presence to labour in the world. You will have your reward. He will "see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.†"

* Hosea vi. 4.

* John xvi. 22. The foregoing Sermon may be illustrated by the following passage from Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living*, iv. 7. "Do not seek for deliciousness and sensible consolations in the actions of religion; but only regard the duty and the conscience of it. For, although in the beginning of religion, most frequently, and, at some other times, irregularly, God complies with our infirmity, and encourages our duty with little overflowings of spiritual joy, and sensible pleasure, and delicacies in prayer, so as we seem to feel some little beam of Heaven, and great refreshment from the Spirit of consolation; yet this is not always safe for us to have, neither safe for us to expect and look for; and when we do, it is apt to make us cool in our inquiries and waitings upon Christ, when we want them: it is a running after Him, not for the miracles, but for the leaves; not for the wonderful things of God, and the desires of pleasing him, but for the pleasure of pleasing ourselves. And, as we must not judge our devotion to be barren or unfruitful, when we want the overflowings of joy running over, so neither must we cease for want of them. If our spirits can serve God choosingly and greedily, out of pure conscience of our duty, it is better in itself, and more safe to us."

SERMON X.

PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE.

LUKE xii. 1.

“When there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

HYPOCRISY is a serious word. We are accustomed to consider the hypocrite as a hateful, despicable character, and an uncommon one. How is it, then, that our Blessed Lord, when surrounded by an innumerable multitude, began, *first of all*, to warn His disciples against hypocrisy, as though they were in especial danger of becoming like those base deceivers, the Pharisees? Thus an instructive subject is opened to our consideration, which I will now pursue.

I say, we are accustomed to consider the hypocrite as a character of excessive wickedness, and of very rare occurrence. That hypocrisy is a great wickedness, need not be questioned; but that it is an uncommon sin, is not true, as a little examination will show us. For what is a hypocrite? We are apt to understand, by a hypocrite, one who makes a profession of religion for secret ends, without practising what he professes; who is malevolent, covetous, or profligate, while he assumes an outward sanctity in his words and conduct; and who does so deliberately and without remorse, deceiving others, and not at all self-deceived. Such a man, truly, would be a portent, for he seems to disbelieve the existence of a God who sees the heart. I will not deny that in some ages, nay, in all ages, a few such men have existed. But this is not what our Saviour seems to have meant by a hypocrite, nor were the Pharisees such.

The Pharisees, it is true, said one thing and did another; but they were not aware that they were thus inconsistent; they deceived *themselves* as well as others. Indeed, it is not in human nature to deceive others for any long time, without in a measure deceiving ourselves also. And, in most cases, we contrive to deceive ourselves as much as we deceive others. The Pharisees boasted they were Abraham's children, not at all understanding, not knowing, what was implied in the term. They

were not really included under the blessing given to Abraham, and they wished the world to believe they were; but then they also themselves *thought* that they were, or, at least, with whatever misgivings, they were, on the whole, persuaded of it. They had deceived themselves as well as the world; and therefore our Lord sets before them the great and plain truth, which, simple as it was, they had forgotten. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."*

This truth, I say, they had *forgotten*;—for doubtless they once knew it. There was a time, doubtless, when in some measure they knew themselves, and what they were doing. When they began (each of them in his turn) to deceive the people, they were *not*, at the moment, *self-deceived*. But by degrees they forgot,—because they did not care to retain it in their knowledge,—they forgot that to be blessed like Abraham, they must be holy like Abraham; that outward ceremonies avail nothing without inward purity, that their thoughts and motives must be heavenly. Part of their duty they altogether ceased to know; another part they might still know indeed, but did not value as they ought. They became ignorant of their own spiritual condition; it did not come home to them, that they were supremely influenced by worldly objects; that zeal for God's service was but a secondary principle in their conduct, and that they loved the praise of men better than God's praise. They went on merely talking of religion, of heaven and hell, the blessed and the reprobate, till their discourses became but words of course in their mouths, with no true meaning attached to them; and they either did not read Holy Scripture at all, or read it without earnestness and watchfulness to get at its real sense. Accordingly, they were scrupulously careful of paying tythe even in the least matters, of mint, anise, and cummin, while they omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith; and on this account our Lord calls them "*blind guides*,"—not bold impious deceivers, who *knew* that they were false guides, but *blind*.† Again, they were *blind*, in thinking that, had they lived in their fathers' days, they would not have killed the prophets as their fathers did. They did not know themselves; they had unawares deceived themselves as well as the people. Ignorance of their own ignorance was their punishment and the evidence of their sin. "If ye were blind," our Saviour says to them, if you were simply blind, and conscious you were so, and distressed at it, "ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see,"—they did not even know their blindness—"therefore your sin remaineth."‡

* John viii. 39.

† Matt. xxiii. 24. Luke xi. 39—52.

‡ John ix. 40, 41. Vide James i. 22.

This then is hypocrisy ;—not simply for a man to deceive others, knowing all the while that he *is* deceiving them, but to deceive himself *and* others at the same time, to aim at their praise by a religious profession without perceiving that he loves their praise more than the praise of God, and that he is professing far more than he practices. And if this be the true Scripture meaning of the word, we have some insight (as it appears) into the reasons which induced our Divine Teacher to warn His disciples in so marked a way against hypocrisy. An innumerable multitude was thronging Him, and His disciples were around Him. Twelve of them had been appointed to minister to Him as His especial friends. Other seventy had been sent out from Him with miraculous gifts ; and, on their return, had with triumph told of their own wonderful doings. All of them had been addressed by Him as the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the children of His kingdom. *They* were the mediators between Him and the people at large, introducing to His notice the sick and heavy-laden. And now they stood by Him, partaking in His popularity, perhaps glorifying in their connection with the Christ, and pleased to be gazed upon by the impatient crowd. Then it was that, instead of addressing the multitude, He spoke first of all to His disciples, saying, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy ;” as if He had said, “What is the chief sin of My enemies and persecutors ? not that they openly deny God, but that they love a profession of religion for the sake of the praise of men that follows it. They like to contrast themselves with other men ; they pride themselves on being a little flock, to whom life is secured in the midst of reproaches ; they like to stand and be admired, amid their religious performances, and think to be saved, not by their own personal holiness, but by the faith of their father, Abraham. All this delusion may come upon you also, if you forget that you are hereafter to be tried one by one at God’s judgment-seat, according to your works. At present, indeed, you are invested in My greatness, and have the credit of My teaching and holiness : but ‘there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known,’ at the last day.”

This warning against hypocrisy becomes still more needful and impressive from the greatness of the Christian privileges as contrasted with the Jewish. The Pharisees boasted they were Abraham’s children ; we have the infinitely higher blessing which fellowship with Christ imparts. In our infancy we have all been gifted with the most awful and glorious titles, as children of God, members of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. We have been honoured with the grant of spiritual influences, which have overshadowed and rested upon us, making our very bodies temples of God ; and when we came to years of discretion, we

were admitted to the mystery of a heavenly communication of the Body and Blood of Christ. What is more likely, considering our perverse nature, than that we should neglect the duties, while we wish to retain the privileges of our Christian profession? Our Lord has sorrowfully foretold in his parables what was to happen in His Church; for instance, when he compared it to a net which gathered of every kind, but not inspected till the end, and then emptied of its various contents, good and bad. Till the day of visitation the visible Church will ever be full of such hypocrites as I have described, who live on under her shadow, enjoying the name of Christian, and vainly fancying they will partake its ultimate blessedness.

Perhaps, however, it will be granted, that there are vast numbers in the Christian world thus professing without adequately practising; and yet denied that such a case is enough to constitute a hypocrite in the Scripture sense of the word; as if a hypocrite were one who professes himself to be what he is not, *with some bad motive*. It may be urged that the Pharisees had an *end* in what they did, which careless and formal Christians have not. But consider for a moment what was the motive which urged the Pharisees to their hypocrisy; surely that they might be seen of men, have glory of men.* This is our Lord's own account of them. Now who will say that the esteem and fear of the world's judgment, and the expectation of worldly advantages, do not at present most powerfully influence the generality of men in their profession of Christianity? so much so, that it is a hard matter, and is thought a great and noble act for men who live in the public world to do what they believe to be their duty to God in a straightforward way, should the opinion of society about it happen to run counter to them. Indeed, there hardly has been a time since the Apostles' day, in which men were more likely than in this age, to do their good deeds to be seen of men, to lay out for human praise, and therefore to shape their actions by the world's rule rather than God's will. We ought to be very suspicious, every one of us, of the soundness of our faith and virtue. Let us consider whether we should act as strictly as we now do, were the eyes of our acquaintance and neighbours withdrawn from us. Not that a regard to the opinion of others is a bad motive; in subordination to the fear of God's judgment, it is innocent and allowable, and in many cases a duty to admit it: and the opportunity of doing so is a gracious gift given from God to lead us forward in the right way. But when we *prefer* man's fallible judgment to God's unerring command, then it is we are wrong,—and in two ways; both *because* we prefer it, and because, being fallible,

* Matt. vi. 2, 5.

it will mislead us; and what I am asking you, my brethren, is, not whether you merely regard man's opinion of you, (which you ought to do,) but whether you set it before God's judgment, which you assuredly should not do,—and which if you do, you are like the Pharisees, so far as to be hypocrites, though you may not go so far as they did in their hollow self-deceiving ways.

1. That even decently conducted Christians are most extensively and fearfully ruled by the opinion of society about them, instead of living by faith in the unseen God, is proved to my mind by the following circumstance :—that according as their rank in life makes men independent of the judgment of others, so the profession of regularity and strictness is given up. There are two classes of men who are withdrawn from the judgment of the community ; those who are above it, and those who are below it :—the poorest class of all, which has no thought of maintaining itself by its own exertions, and has lost shame ; and what is called (to use a word of this world) high fashionable society, by which I mean not the rich necessarily, but those among the rich and noble who throw themselves out of the pale of the community, break the ties which attach them to others, whether above or below themselves, and then live to themselves and each other, their ordinary doings being unseen by the world at large. Now since it happens that these two ranks, the outlaws (so to say) of public opinion, are (to speak generally) the most openly and daringly profligate in their conduct, how much may be thence inferred about the influence of a mere love of reputation in keeping us *all* in the right way ! It is plain, as a matter of fact, that the great mass of men are protected from gross sin by the forms of society. The received laws of propriety and decency, the prospect of a loss of character, stand as sentinels, giving the alarm, long before their *Christian* principles have time to act. But among the poorest and rudest class, on the contrary, such artificial safeguards against crime are unknown ; and (observe I say) it is among them and that other class I have mentioned, that vice and crime are most frequent. Are we, *therefore*, better than they ? Scarcely. Doubtless their temptations are greater, which alone prevents our boasting over them ; but, besides, do we not rather gain from the sight of their more scandalous sins a grave lesson and an urgent warning for ourselves, a call on us for honest self-examination ? for we are of the same nature, with like passions with them ; we may be better than they, but our mere seeming so is no proof that we are. The question is, whether, in spite of our greater apparent virtue, we should not fall like them, if the restraint of society were withdrawn ; i. e. whether we are not in the main hypocrites like the Pharisees, professing to honour God, while we honour him only so far as men require it of us ?

2. Another test of being like or unlike the Pharisees may be mentioned. Our Lord warns us against hypocrisy in three respects,—in doing our alms, in praying, and in fasting. “When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast.”* Here let us ask ourselves, first about our *alms*, whether we be not like the hypocrites. Doubtless some of our charity must be public, for the very mentioning our name encourages others to follow our example. Still I ask, is much of our charity also *private*? is as much private as is public? I will not ask whether *much more* is done in secret than is done before men, though this, if possible, ought to be the case. But at least, if we think in the first place of our public charities, and only in the second of the duty of private alms-giving, are we not plainly like the hypocritical Pharisees?

The manner of our *prayers* will supply us with a still stronger test. We are here assembled in worship. It is well. Have we really been praying as well as seeming to pray? have our minds been actively employed in trying to form in us the difficult habit of prayer? Further, are we as regular in praying in our closet to our Father which is in secret as in public?† Do we feel any great remorse in omitting our morning and evening prayers, in saying them hastily and irreverently? And yet should not we feel excessive pain and shame, and rightly, at the thought of having committed any *open* impropriety in church? Should we, for instance, be betrayed into laughter or other light conduct during the service, should not we feel most acutely ashamed of ourselves, and consider we had disgraced ourselves, notwithstanding our habit of altogether forgetting the next moment any sinful carelessness at prayer in our closet? Is not this to be as the Pharisees?

Take, again, the case of *fasting*. Alas! most of us, I fear, do not think at all of fasting. We do not even let it enter our thoughts, nor debate with ourselves, whether or not it be needful or suitable for us to fast, or in any way mortify our flesh. Well, this is *one* neglect of Christ's words. But again, neither do we disfigure our outward appearance to *seem* to fast, which the Pharisees did. Here we seem to differ from the Pharisees. Yet, in truth, this very apparent difference is a

* Matt. vi. 2—16.

† Matt. vi. 6.

singular confirmation of our real likeness to them. Austerity gained them credit; it would gain us none. It would gain us little more than mockery from the world. The age is changed. In Christ's time the show of fasting made men appear saints in the eyes of the many. See then what we do. We keep up the outward show of almsgiving and public worship, observances, which, (it so happens) the world approves. We have dropped the show of fasting, which (it so happens) the world at the present day derides. Are we quite sure that if fasting were in honour, we should not begin to hold fasts, as the Pharisees? Thus we seek the praise of men. But in all this, how are we, in any good measure, following *God's* guidance and promises?

We see, then, how seasonable is our Lord's warning to us, His disciples, first of all, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy: professing without practising. He warns us against it as *leaven*, as a subtle insinuating evil which will silently spread itself throughout the whole character, if we suffer it. He warns us, His disciples, lovingly considerate for us, lest we make ourselves a scorn and derision to the profane multitude, who throng around to gaze curiously, or malevolently, or selfishly, at His doings. *They* seek Him, not as adoring Him for His miracles' sake, but, if so be, they can obtain any thing from Him, or can please their natural tastes while they profess to honour Him; and in time of trial they desert Him. They make a gain of godliness, or a fashion. So He speaks not to *them*, but to us, His little flock, His Church, to whom it has been His Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom;* and He bids *us* take heed of falling as the Pharisees did before us, and like them coming short of our reward. He warns us that the pretence of religion never deceives beyond a little time; that sooner or later, "whatsoever we have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light, and that which we have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops." Even in this world the discovery is often made. A man is brought into temptation of some sort or other, and having no root in himself falls away, and gives occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.† Nay, this will happen to him without himself being aware of it; for though a man begins to deceive others before he deceives himself, yet he does not deceive them so long as he deceives himself. Their eyes are at length opened to him, while his own continue closed to himself. The world sees through him; detects, and triumphs in detecting, his low motives and secular plans and artifices, while he is but very faintly sensible of them himself, much less has a notion that others clearly see them. And thus he will

* Luke xii. 32.

† 2 Sam. xii. 14.

go on professing the highest principles and feelings, while bad men scorn him, and insult true religion in his person.

Do not think I am speaking of one or two men, when I speak of the scandal which a Christian's inconsistency brings upon his cause. The Christian world, so called, what is it practically, but a witness for Satan rather than a witness for Christ? Rightly understood, doubtless the very disobedience of Christians witnesses for Him who will overcome whenever He is judged. But is there any *antecedent* prejudice against religion so great as that which is occasioned by the lives of its professors? Let us ever remember, that all who follow God with but a half heart, strengthen the hands of His enemies, give cause of exultation to wicked men, perplex inquirers after truth, and bring reproach upon their Saviour's name. It is a known fact, that unbelievers triumphantly maintain that the greater part of the English people is on *their side*; that the disobedience of professing Christians is a proof, that (whatever they say) yet in their hearts they are unbelievers too. This we ourselves perhaps have heard said; and said, not in the heat of argument, or as a satire, but in sober earnestness, from real and full persuasion that it was true; that is, the men who have cast off their Saviour, console themselves with the idea, that their neighbours, though too timid or too indolent openly to do so, yet in secret, or at least in their real character, do the same. And witnessing this general inconsistency, they despise them as unmanly, cowardly, and slavish, and hate religion as the origin of this debasement of mind. "The people who in this country call themselves Christians (says one of these men,) with few exceptions, are *not* believers; and every man of sense, whose bigotry has not blinded him, must see that persons who are evidently devoted to *worldly gain*, or *worldly vanities*, or *luxurious enjoyments*, though still preserving a little *decency*, while they *pretend* to believe the infinitely momentous doctrines of Christianity, are performers in a *miserable farce*, which is beneath contempt." Such are the words of an open enemy of Christ; as though he felt he dared confess his unbelief, and despised the mean hypocrisy of those around him. His argument, indeed, will not endure the trial of God's judgment at the last day, for no one is an unbeliever but by his own fault. But though no excuse for him, it is their condemnation. What, indeed, will they plead before the Throne of God, when on the revelation of all hidden deeds, this reviler of religion attributes his unbelief in a measure to the sight of *their* inconsistent conduct? When he mentions this action or that conversation, this violent or worldly conduct, that covetous or unjust transaction, or that self-indulgent life, as partly the occasion of his falling away? "Wo unto the world (it is written), because of

scandals; for it must needs be that scandals come, but wo to that man *by whom* the scandal cometh!"* Wo unto the deceiver and self-deceived! "His hope shall perish, his hope shall be cut off, and his trust shall be a spider's web: he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure."† God give us grace to flee from this wo while we have time! Let us examine ourselves to see if there be any wicked way in us; let us aim at obtaining some comfortable assurance that we are in the narrow way that leads to life. And let us pray God to enlighten us, and to guide us, and to give us the will to please Him, and the power.

SERMON XI.

PROFESSION WITHOUT HYPOCRISY.

GALATIANS iii. 27.

"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."

It is surely most necessary to beware, as our Lord solemnly bids us, of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.‡ We may be infected with it, even though we are not conscious, of our insincerity; for they did not *know* they were hypocrites. Nor need we have any definite bad object plainly before us, for they had none,—only the vague desire to be seen and honoured by the world, such as may influence us. So it would seem, that there are vast multitudes of Pharisaical hypocrites among baptized Christians; i. e. men professing without practising. Nay, so far we may be called hypocritical, one and all; for no Christian on earth altogether lives up to his profession.

But here some one may ask, whether, in saying that hypocrisy is professing without practising, I am not, in fact, overthrowing all external religion from the foundation, since all creeds, and prayers, and ordinances, go beyond the real belief and frame of mind of even the best Christians. This is even the ground which some men actually take. They say that it is wrong to baptize, and call Christians, those

* Matt. xviii. 7. † Job viii. 13—15. ‡ Vide Sermon X.

who have not yet shown themselves to be really such. "As many as are baptized into Christ, put on Christ;" so says the text, and these men argue from it, that till we have actually put on Christ, that is, till we have given our heart to Christ's service, and in our degree become holy as He is holy, it can do no good to be baptized into His name. Rather it is a great evil, for it is to become hypocrites. Nay, really humble, well-intentioned men, feel this about themselves. They shrink from retaining the blessed titles and privileges which Christ gave them in infancy, as being unworthy of them; and they fear lest they are really hypocrites like the Pharisees, after all their better thoughts and exertions.

Now the obvious answer to this mistaken view of religion is to say, that, on the showing of such reasoners, *no* one at all ought to be baptized in any case, and called a Christian; for no one *acts up* to his baptismal professions; no one believes, worships, and obeys duly, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whose servant he is made in baptism. And yet the Lord *did* say, "Go, baptize all nations; clearly showing us, that a man may be a fit subject for baptism, though he does not in fact practise every thing that he professes, and therefore, that any fears we may have, lest men should be in some sense like the Pharisees, must not keep us from making them Christians.

But I shall treat the subject more at length, in order that we may understand what kind of disobedience is really hypocrisy, and what is not, lest timid consciences should be frightened. Now men profess without feeling and doing, or are hypocrites, in nothing so much as in their prayers. This is plain. Prayer is the most directly religious of all our duties; and our falling short of our duty, is, then, most clearly displayed. Therefore I will enlarge upon the case of prayer, to explain what I do *not* mean by hypocrisy. We then use the most solemn words, either without attending to what we are saying, or, (even if we do attend,) without worthily entering into its meaning. Thus we seem to resemble the Pharisees; a question in consequence arises, whether, this being the case, we should go on repeating prayers which evidently do not suit us. The men I just now spoke of, affirm that we ought to leave them off. Accordingly, such persons in their own case first give up the Church prayers, and take to others which they think will suit them better. Next, when these disappoint them, they have recourse to what is called extempore prayer; and afterwards perhaps, discontented in turn with this mode of addressing Almighty God, and as unable to fix their thoughts as they were before, they come to the conclusion that they ought not to pray, except when specially moved to prayer by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Now, in answer to such a manner of reasoning and acting, I would maintain that no one is to be reckoned a Pharisee or hypocrite in his prayers who *tries* not to be one,—who aims at knowing and correcting himself,—and who is accustomed to pray, though not perfectly, yet not indolently or in a self-satisfied way; however lamentable his actual wanderings of mind may be, or, again, however poorly he enters into the meaning of his prayers, even when he attends to them.

1. First, take the case of not being *attentive* to the prayers. Men, it seems, are tempted to leave off prayers because they cannot follow them, because they find their thoughts wander when they repeat them. I answer, that to pray attentively is a *habit*. This must ever be kept in mind. No one *begins* with having his heart thoroughly in them; but by trying, he is enabled to attend more and more, and at length, after many trials and a long schooling of himself, to fix his mind steadily on them. No one (I repeat) *begins* with being attentive. Novelty in prayers is the cause of persons being attentive in the outset, and novelty is out of the question in the Church prayers; for we have heard them from childhood, and knew them by heart long before we could understand them. No one, then, when he first turns his thoughts to religion, finds it easy to pray; he is irregular in his religious feelings; he prays more earnestly at some times than at others; his devotional seasons come by fits and starts; he cannot account for his state of mind, or reckon upon himself; he frequently finds that he is more disposed for prayer at any time and place than those set apart for the purpose. All this is to be expected; for no habit is formed at once; and before the flame of religion in the heart is purified and strengthened by long practise and experience, of course it will be capricious in its motions, it will flare about (so to say) and flicker, and at times seem almost to go out.

However, impatient men do not well consider this; they overlook or are offended at the necessity of humble, tedious practice to enable them to pray attentively, and they account for their coldness and wanderings of thought in any way but the true one. Sometimes they attribute this inequality in their religious feelings to the arbitrary coming and going of God's Holy Spirit; a most irreverent and presumptuous judgment, which I should not mention, except that men *do* form it, and therefore it is necessary to state in order to condemn it. Again, sometimes they think that they shall make themselves attentive all at once by bringing before their minds the more sacred doctrines of the Gospel, and thus rousing and constraining their souls. This does for a time; but when the novelty is over, they find themselves relapsing into their former inattention, without apparently having made any advance. And others again, when discontented with their wanderings during prayer, lay the

fault on the prayers themselves as being too long. This is a common excuse, and I wish to call your attention to it.

If any one allèges the *length* of the Church prayers as a reason for his not keeping his mind fixed upon them, I would beg him to ask his conscience whether he sincerely believes this to be at bottom the real cause of his inattention? Does he think he should attend *better* if the prayers were shorter? This is the question he has to consider. If he answers that he believes he *should* attend more closely in that case, then I go on to ask, whether he attends more closely (as it *is*,) to the first part of the service than to the last; whether his mind is his own, regularly fixed on what he is engaged in, for any time in any part of the service? Now, if he is obliged to own that this is not the case, that his thoughts are wandering in all parts of the service, and that even during the Confession, or the Lord's Prayer, which come first, they are not his own, it is quite clear that it is not the *length* of the service which is the real cause of his inattention, but his being deficient in the *habit* of being attentive. If, on the other hand, he answers that he *can* fix his thoughts for a time, and during the early part of the service, I would have him reflect that even this degree of attention was not always his own, that *it* has been the work of time and practice; and, if by trying he has got so far, by trying he may go on, and learn to attend for a still longer time, till at length he is able to keep up his attention through the whole service.

However, I wish chiefly to speak to such as are dissatisfied with themselves, and despair of attending properly. Let a man once set his heart upon learning to pray, and strive to learn, and no failures he may continue to make in his manner of praying are sufficient to cast him from God's favour. Let him but persevere, not discouraged at his wanderings, not frightened into a notion he is a hypocrite, not shrinking from the honourable titles which God puts on him. Doubtless he should be humbled at his own weakness, indolence, and carelessness; and he should feel (he cannot feel too much) the guilt, alas! which he is ever contracting in his prayers by the irreverence of his inattention. Still he must not leave off his prayers, but go on looking towards Christ his Saviour. Let him but be in earnest, striving to master his thoughts, and to be serious, and all the guilt of his incidental failings will be washed away in his Lord's blood. Only let him not be contented with himself; only let him not neglect to *attempt* to obey. What a simple rule it is, to *try* to be attentive in order to be so! and yet it is continually overlooked; that is, we do not *systematically* try, we do not make a point of attempting and attempting over and over again in spite of bad success; we attempt only now and then, and our best devotion is merely

when our hearts are excited by some accident which may or may not happen again.

So much on inattention to our prayers, which, I say, should not surprise or frighten us, which does not prove us to be hypocrites unless we acquiesce in it; or oblige us to leave them off, but rather to learn to attend to them.

2. I proceed, secondly, to remark on the difficulty of *entering into* the meaning of them, when we *do* attend to them.

Here a tender conscience will ask, "How is it possible I *can* rightly use the solemn words which occur in the prayers?" A tender conscience *alone* speaks thus. Those confident objectors whom I spoke of just now, who maintain that set prayer is necessarily a mere formal service in the generality of instances, a service in which the heart has no part, they are silent here. They do not feel *this* difficulty, which is the real one; they use the most serious and awful words lightly and without remorse, as if they really entered into the meaning of what is, in truth, beyond the intelligence of Angels. But the humble and contrite believer, coming to Christ for pardon and help, perceives the great strait he is in, in having to address the God of Heaven. This perplexity of mind it was which led convinced sinners in former times to seek refuge in beings short of God; not as denying God's supremacy, or shunning Him, but discerning the vast distance between themselves and Him, and seeking some resting places by the way, some Zoar, some little city near to flee unto,* because of the height of God's mountain, up which the way of escape lay. And then gradually becoming devoted to those whom they trusted, Saints, Angels, or good men living, and copying them, their faith had a fall, and their virtue trailed upon the ground, for want of props to rear it heavenward. We Christians, sinners though we be like other men, are not allowed thus to debase our nature, or to defraud ourselves of God's mercy; and though it be very terrible to speak as to the living God, yet speak we must, or die; tell our sorrows we must or there is no hope; for created mediators and patrons are forbidden us, and to trust in an arm of flesh is made a sin.

Therefore let a man reflect, whoever from tenderness of conscience shuns the Church as above him (whether he shuns her services, or her sacraments,) that, awful as it is to approach Christ, to speak to Him, to "eat His flesh and drink His blood," and to live in Him, *to whom shall he go?* See what it comes to. Christ is the only way of salvation open to sinners. Truly we *are* children, and cannot suitably feel the words which the Church teaches us, though we say them after her, nor feel

* Gen. xix. 20.

duly reverent at God's presence! Yet let us but know our own ignorance and weakness, and we are safe. God accepts those who thus come in faith, bringing nothing as their offering, but a confession of sin. And this is the highest excellence to which we can attain; to understand our own hypocrisy, insincerity, and shallowness of mind,—to own, while we pray, that we cannot pray aright,—to repent of our repentings,—and to submit ourselves wholly to His judgment, who could indeed be extreme with us, but has already shown His loving-kindness in bidding us to pray. And, while we thus conduct ourselves, we must learn to feel that God knows all this before we say it, and far better than we do. He does not need to be informed of our extreme worthlessness. We must pray in the spirit and the temper of the extremest abasement, but we need not search for adequate words to express this, for in truth no words are bad enough for our case. Some men are dissatisfied with the confessions of sin we make in Church, as not being strong enough; but none *can* be strong enough; let us be satisfied with sober words, which have been ever in use; it will be a great thing if we enter into *them*. No need of searching for impassioned words to express our repentance, when we do not rightly enter even into the most ordinary expressions.

Therefore when we pray, let us not be as the hypocrites, making a show; nor use vain repetitions with the heathen; let us compose ourselves, and kneel down quietly as to a work far above us, preparing our minds for our own imperfection in prayer, meekly repeating the wonderful words of the Church our Teacher, and desiring with the Angels to look into them. When we call God our Father Almighty, or own ourselves miserable offenders, and beg Him to spare us, let us recollect that, though we are using a strange language, yet Christ is pleading for us in the same words with full understanding of them, and availing power; and that, though we know not what we should pray for as we ought, yet the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with complaints unutterable. Thus feeling God to be around us and in us, and therefore keeping ourselves still and collected, we shall serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; and we shall take back with us to our common employments the assurance that He is still gracious to us, in spite of our sins, not willing we should perish, desirous of our perfection, and ready to form us day by day after the fashion of that divine image which in baptism was outwardly stamped upon us.

I have spoken only of our prayers, and but referred to our general profession of Christianity. It is plain, however, what has been said about praying, may be applied to all we do and say as Christians. It is true that we profess to be saints, to be guided by the highest principles and to be ruled by the Spirit of God. We have long ago promised to

believe and obey. It is also true that we cannot do these things aright; nay, even with God's help, (such is our sinful weakness), still we fall short of our duty. Nevertheless we must not cease to profess. We must not put off from us the wedding garment which Christ gave us in baptism. We may still rejoice in Him without being hypocrites, that is, if we labour day by day to make that wedding garment our own; to fix it on us and so incorporate it with ourselves, that death, which strips us of all things, may be unable to tear it from us, though as yet it be in great measure but an outward garb covering our own nakedness.

I conclude by reminding you, how great God's mercy is in allowing us to clothe ourselves in the glory of Christ from the first, even before we are worthy* of it. I suppose there is nothing so distressing to a true Christian as to have to *prove himself* such to others; both as being conscious of his own numberless failings, and from his dislike of display. Now Christ has anticipated the difficulties of his modesty. He does not allow such a one to speak for himself; He speaks for him. He introduces each of us to his brethren, not as we are in ourselves, fit to be despised and rejected on account of "the temptations which are in our flesh," but "as messengers of God, even as Christ Jesus." It is our happiness that we need bring nothing in proof of our fellowship with Christians, besides our baptism. This is what a great many persons do not understand; they think that none are to be accounted fellow-Christians but those who evidence themselves to be such to their fallible understandings; and hence they encourage others, who wish for their praise, to practice all kinds of display, as a seal of their regeneration. Who can tell the harm this does to the true modesty of the Christian spirit? Instead of using the words of the Church and speaking to God, men are led to use their own words, and make man their judge and justifier.† They think it necessary to tell out their secret feelings, and to enlarge on what God has done to their own souls in particular. And thus making themselves really answerable for all the words they use, which are altogether their own, they do in this case become hypocrites; they do say more than they can in reality feel. Of course a religious man will naturally, and unawares, out of the very fullness of his heart, show his deep feeling and his conscientiousness to his near friends; but when to do so is made a matter of *necessity*, an *object* to be aimed at, and is an *intentional* act, then it is that hypocrisy must, more or less, sully our faith. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ;" this is the Apostle's decision. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female;

* Matt. xxii. 8. Col. i. 10.

† 1 Cor. iv. 3—5.

for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Our Church follows this rule, and bidding us keep quiet, speaks for us; robes us from head to foot in the garments of righteousness, and exhorts us to live henceforth to God. But the disputer of this world reverses this procedure; he strips off all our privileges, bids us renounce our dependance on the Mother of saints, tells us we must each be a Church to himself, and must show himself to the world to be by himself and in himself the elect of God, in order to prove his right to the privileges of a Christian.

Far be it from us thus to fight against God's gracious purposes to man, and to make the weak brother perish for whom Christ died!* Let us acknowledge all to be Christians, who have not by open word or deed renounced their fellowship with us, and let us try to lead them on into all truth. And for ourselves let us endeavour to enter more and more fully into the meaning of our own prayers and professions; let us humble ourselves for the very little we do, and the poor advance we make; let us avoid unnecessary display of religion; let us do our duty in that state of life to which God has called us. Thus proceeding, we shall, through God's grace, form within us the glorious mind of Christ. Whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, walking by this rule, we shall become, at length, true saints, sons of God. We shall be upright and perfect, lights in the world, the image of Him who died that we might be conformed to His likeness.

S E R M O N X I I.

PROFESSION WITHOUT OSTENTATION.

MATTHEW v. 14.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

OUR SAVIOUR gives us a command, in this passage of His Sermon on the Mount, to manifest our religious profession before all men. "Ye are the light of the world," He says to His disciples; "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that

* 1 Cor. viii. 11.

are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Yet presently He says, "When thou doest alms . . . when thou prayest . . . when ye fast . . . appear not unto men . . . but unto thy Father which is in secret."* How are these commands to be reconciled? how are we at once to *profess* ourselves Christians, and yet hide our Christian words, deeds, and self-denials?

I will now attempt to answer this question; that is, to explain how we may be witnesses to the world for God, and yet without pretension or affectation, or rude and indecent ostentation.

Now, first, much might be said on that mode of witnessing Christ which consists in conforming to His Church. He who simply did what the Church bids him do, (if he did no more,) would witness a good confession to the world, and one which cannot be hid; and at the same time, with very little, if any, personal display. He does only what he is told to do; he takes no responsibility on himself. The Apostles and Martyrs who founded the Church, the Saints in all ages who have adorned it, the Heads of it now alive, all these take from him the weight of his profession, and bear the blame (so to call it) of seeming ostentatious. I do not say, that irreligious men will not *call* such a one boastful, or austere, or a hypocrite; that is not the question. The question is, whether in *God's* judgment he *deserves* the censure; whether he is not as Christ would have him, *really and truly* (whatever the world may say) joining humility to a bold outward profession; whether he is not, in thus acting, preaching Christ without hurting his own pureness, gentleness, and modesty of character. If indeed a man stands forth *on his own ground*, declaring himself as an individual a witness for Christ, then indeed he *is* grieving and disturbing the calm spirit given us by God. But God's merciful providence has saved us this temptation, and forbidden us to admit it. He bids us unite together in one, and to shelter our personal profession under the authority of the general body. Thus, while we show ourselves as lights to the world far more effectively than if we glimmered separately in the lone wilderness without communication, at the same time we do so with far greater secrecy and humility. Therefore it is, that the Church does so many things for us, appoints Fasts and Feasts, times of public prayer, the order of the sacraments, the services of devotion at marriages and deaths, and all accompanied by a fixed form of sound words; in order, (I say,) to remove from us individually the burden of a high profession, of implying great things of ourselves by inventing for ourselves solemn

* 1 Matt. vi. 2—18.

prayers and praises,—a task far above the generality of Christians, to say the least, a task which humble men will shrink from, lest they prove hypocrites, and which will hurt those who *do* undertake it, by making them rude-spirited and profane. I am desirous of speaking of this subject as a matter of *practice*; for I am sure, that if we wish really and in fact to spread the knowledge of the Truth, we shall do so far more powerfully as *well* as purely, by keeping together, than by witnessing one by one. Men are to be seen adopting all kinds of strange ways of giving glory (as they think) to God. If they would but follow the Church; come together in prayer on Sundays and Saints' days nay, every day; honour the rubric by keeping to it obediently, and conforming their families to the *spirit* of the Prayer-book, I say, that on the whole they would practically do vastly more good than by trying new religious plans, founding new religious societies, or striking out new religious views. I put out of account the greater blessing they might expect to find in the way of duty, which is the first consideration.

2. One way of professing without display has been mentioned;—obeying the Church. Now in the next place, consider how great a profession, and yet a profession how unconscious and modest, arises from the mere ordinary manner in which any strict Christian lives. Let this thought be a satisfaction to uneasy minds which fear lest they are not confessing Christ, yet dread to display. Your *life* displays Christ without your intending it. You cannot help it. Your *words and deeds* will show on the long run (as it is said,) where your treasure is, and your heart. Out of the abundance of your heart your mouth speaketh words “seasoned with salt.” We sometimes find men who aim at doing their duty in the common course of life, *surprised* to hear that they are ridiculed, and called hard names by careless or worldly persons. This is as it should be; it is as it should be, that they are *surprised* at it. If a private Christian sets out with *expecting* to make a disturbance in the world, the fear is, lest he be not so humble-minded as he should be. But those who go on quietly in the way of obedience and yet are detected by the keen eye of the jealous, self-condemning yet proud world, and who, on discovering their situation, first shrink from it and are distressed, then look to see if they have done aught wrong, and after all are sorry for it, and but slowly and very timidly (if at all) learn to rejoice in it, these are Christ's flock. These are they who follow Him who was meek and lowly of heart, His elect in whom He sees His own image reflected. Consider how such men show forth their light in a wicked world, yet unconsciously. Moses came down from the mount, and “wist not that the skin of his face shone” as one who had held intercourse with God. But “when Aaron and all the

children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him."* Who can estimate the power of our separate words spoken in season! How many of them are recollected and cherished by this person or that which *we* have forgotten, and bear fruit! How do our good deeds excite *others* to rivalry in a good cause, as the Angels perceive though we do not! How are men thinking of us we never heard of, or saw but once, and in far countries unknown! Let us view this pleasing side of our doings, as well as the dark prospect of our evil communications. Doubtless, our prayers and praises are rising as a sweet sacrifice, pleasing to God;† and pleasing to him, not as an office of devotion, but of charity towards all men. Our businesses and our amusements, our joys and our sorrows, our opinions, tastes, studies, views and principles, are drawn *one* way, heavenward. Be we high or low, in our place we can serve, and in consequence glorify him who died for us. "A little maid," who was "brought away captive out of the land of Israel, and waited on Naaman's wife,"‡ pointed out to the great captain of the host of the king of Syria the means of recovery from his leprosy, and "his *servants*" spoke good words to him afterwards, and brought him back to his reason when he would have rejected the mode of cure which the prophet prescribed. This may quiet impatient minds, and console the over-scrupulous conscience. "Wait on God and be doing good," and you must, you cannot but be showing your light before men as a city on a hill.

3. Still it is quite true that there are circumstances under which a Christian is bound openly to express his opinion on religious subjects and matters; and this is the real difficulty; viz. how to do so without display. As a man's place in society is here or there, so it is more or less his duty to speak his mind freely. We must never countenance sin and error. Now the more obvious and modest way of discountenancing evil is by silence, and by separating from it; for example, we are bound to keep aloof from deliberate and open sinners. St. Paul expressly tells us, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother (i. e. a Christian) be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat."§ And St. John gives us the like advice with respect to heretics. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, (i. e. the true doctrine of Christ,) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."|| It is plain that such conduct on our part requires no great

* Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30.

† Acts x. 4.

‡ 2 Kings v. 2.

§ 1 Cor. v. 11.

|| 2 John 10, 11.

display, for it is but conforming to the rules of the Church; though it is often difficult to know on what occasions we ought to adopt it, which is another question.

A more difficult duty is that of passing judgment, (as a Christian is often bound to do,) on events of the day and public men. It becomes his duty, in proportion as he has station and influence in the community, in order that he may persuade others to think as he does. Above all, clergymen are bound to form and pronounce an opinion. It is sometimes said, in familiar language, that a clergyman should have nothing to do with politics. This is true, if it be meant that he should not aim at secular objects, should not side with a political party as such, should not be ambitious of popular applause, or the favour of great men, should not take pleasure and lose time in business of this world, should not be covetous. But if it means that he should not express an opinion and exert an influence one way rather than another, it is plainly unscriptural. Did not the Apostles, with all their reverence for the temporal power, whether Jewish or Roman, and all their separation from worldly ambition, did they not still denounce their rulers as wicked men, who had crucified and slain the Lord's Christ? and would they have been as a city on a hill if they had not done so? If, indeed, this world's concerns could be altogether disjoined from those of Christ's kingdom, then indeed all Christians, (laymen as well as clergy,) should abstain from the thought of temporal affairs, and let the worthless world pass down the stream of events till it perishes; but if (as is the case) what happens in *nations* must affect the cause of *religion* in those nations, since the Church may be seduced and corrupted by the world, and in the world there are myriads of souls to be converted and saved, and since a Christian nation is bound to become part of the Church, therefore it is our duty to stand as a beacon on a hill, to cry aloud and spare not, to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.† And all this may be done without injury to our Christian gentleness and humbleness, though it is difficult to do it. We need not be angry, nor use contentious words, and yet may firmly give our opinion, in proportion as we have the means of forming one, and be zealous towards God in all active good service, and scrupulously and pointedly keep aloof from the bad men whose evil arts we fear.

Another and still more difficult duty is that of personally rebuking those we meet with in the intercourse of life who sin in word or deed, and testifying before them in Christ's name; that is, it is difficult at

* Acts ii. 23. iii. 13—17. iv. 27. xiii. 27.

† Isa. lviii. 1.

once to be unassuming and zealous in such cases. We know it is a plain and repeated precept of Christ to tell others of their faults for charity's sake ; but how is this to be done without seeming, nay, without being, arrogant and severe ? There are persons who are anxious to do their duty to the full, who fear that they are deficient in this particular branch of it, and deficient from a blameable backwardness, and the dread of giving offence ; yet, on the other hand, they feel the painfulness of rebuking another, and, (to use a common word,) the awkwardness of it. Such persons must consider that, though to rebuke is a duty, it is not a duty belonging at once to all men ; and the perplexity which is felt about it often arises from the very impropriety of attempting it in the particular case. It is improper, as a general rule, in the young to witness before the old, otherwise than by their silence. Still more improper is it in inferiors to rebuke their superiors ; for instance, a child his parent, of course ; or a private person his natural and divinely-appointed governor. When we assume a character not suited to us, of course we feel awkward ; and although we may have done so in honesty and zeal (however ill-tutored,) and so God may in mercy accept our service, still He, at the same time, rebukes us by our very feeling of perplexity and shame.—As for such as rudely blame another, and that a superior, and feel no pain at doing so, I have nothing to say to such men, except to express my earnest desire that they may be led into a more Christian frame of mind. They do not even feel the difficulty of witnessing for God without display.

It is to be considered, too, that to do the part of a witness for the truth, to warn and rebuke, is not an elementary duty of a Christian. I mean, that our duties come in a certain order, some before others, and that this is not one of the first of them. Our first duties are to repent and believe. It would be strange, indeed, for a man who had just begun to think of religion, to set up for "some great one," to assume he was a saint and a witness, and to exhort others to turn to God. This is evident. But as time goes on, and his religious character becomes formed, then, while he goes on to perfection in all his duties, he takes upon himself, in the number of these, to witness for God by word of mouth. It is difficult to say, *when* a man has leave openly to rebuke others ; certainly not before he has considerable humility ; the tests of which may be the absence of a feeling of triumph in doing it, a consciousness that he is no better by nature than the person he witnesses before, and that his actual sins are such as to deserve a severe rebuke, were they known to the world ; a love towards the person reprov'd, and a willingness to submit to deserved censure in his turn. In all this I am speaking of laymen. It is a clergyman's duty to rebuke by virtue

of his office. And then, after all, supposing it be clearly our duty to manifest our religious profession in this pointed way before another, in order to do so modestly we must do so kindly and cheerfully, as gently as we can; doing it as little as we can help; not making matters worse than they are, or showing our whole Christian stature (or what we think to be such), when we need but put out a hand (so to say) or give a glance. And above all, (as I have already said,) acting as if we thought, nay really thinking, that it may be the offender's turn some day to rebuke us; not putting ourselves above him, feeling our great imperfections, and desirous he should rebuke us, should occasion require it, and in prospect thanking him; acting, that is, in the spirit in which you warn a man in walking against rugged ground, which may cause him a fall, thinking him bound by your friendly conduct, to do the like favour to you. As to grave occasions of witnessing Christ, they will seldom occur, except a man thrusts himself into society where he never ought to have been, by neglecting the rule, "Come ye out, and be separate;" and then he has scarcely the right to rebuke, having committed the first fault himself. This is another cause of our perplexity in witnessing Christ before the world. We make friends of the sinful in spite of the rules of the Church, and then they have the advantage over us.

To conclude,—The question is often raised, whether a man can do his duty simply and quietly, without being thought ostentatious by the world. It is no great matter to himself whether he is thought so or not, if he has not provoked the opinion. As a general rule, I would say the Church itself is always hated and calumniated by the world, as being in duty bound to make a bold profession. But, whether individual members of the Church are so treated, depends on various circumstances in the case of each. There *are* persons, who, though very strict and conscientious Christians, are yet praised by the world. These are such, as having great meekness and humility, are not so prominent in station or so practically connected with the world as to offend it. Men admire religion, while they can gaze on it as a picture. They think it lovely in books; and as long as they can look upon Christians at a distance, they speak well of them. The Jews in Christ's time built the sepulchres of the prophets whom their fathers killed; then they themselves killed the Just One. They "reverenced" the Son of God before He came, but when their passions and interests were stirred by His coming, then they said, "This is the Heir, come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours."* Thus Christians in active life, thwarting (as

* Mark xii. 7.

they do) the pride and selfishness of the world, are disliked by the world, and have "all manner of evil said against them falsely for Christ's sake."* Still, even under these circumstances, though they must not shrink from the attack on a personal account, it is still their duty to shelter themselves, as far as they can, under the name and authority of the Holy Church; to keep to its ordinances and rules; and, if they are called to suffer for the Church, rather to be drawn forward to the suffering in the common course of duty, than boldly to take upon them the task of defending it. There is no cowardice in this. Some men are placed in posts of danger, and to these danger comes in the way of duty; but others must not intrude into their honourable office. Thus in the first age of the Gospel, our Lord told His followers to fly from city to city, when persecuted; and even the heads of the Church, in the early persecutions, instead of exposing themselves to the fury of the heathen, did their utmost to avoid it. We are a suffering people from the first; but, while on the one hand, we do not defend ourselves illegally, we do not court suffering on the other. We must witness and glorify God, as lights on a hill, through evil report and good report; but the evil and the good report is not so much of our own making as the natural consequence of our Christian profession.

Who can tell God's will concerning this tumultuous world, or how He will dispose of it? He is tossing it hither and thither in His fury, and in its agitation He troubles His own people also. Only, this we know for our comfort. Our light shall never go down; Christ set it upon a hill, and hell shall not prevail against it. The Church will witness on to the last for the Truth, chained indeed to this world, its evil partner, but ever foretelling its ruin, though not believed, and in the end promised a far different recompense. For in the end the Lord Omnipotent shall reign, when the marriage of the Lamb shall come at length, and His wife shall make herself ready; and to her shall be granted "fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."† True and righteous are His judgments; He shall cast death and hell into the lake of fire, and avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him!

"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." May all we be in the number, confessing Christ in this world, that He may confess us before His Father in the last day!

* Matt. v. 11.

† Rev. xix. 6—8.

SERMON XIII.

PROMISING WITHOUT DOING.

MATTHEW xxi. 28—30.

“A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir; and went not.”

OUR religious professions are at a far greater distance from our acting upon them, than we ourselves are aware. We know generally that it is our duty to serve God, and we resolve we will do so faithfully. We are sincere in thus generally desiring and purposing to be obedient, and we think we are in earnest; yet we go away, and presently, without any struggle of mind or apparent change of purpose, almost without knowing ourselves what we do,—we go away and do the very contrary to the resolution we have expressed. This inconsistency is exposed by our Blessed Lord in the second part of the parable which I have taken for my text. You will observe, that in the case of the first son, who said he would not go to work, and yet did go, it is said, “afterward he repented;” he underwent a positive change of purpose. But in the case of the second, it is merely said, “he answered, I go, Sir; and went not;” for here there was *no* revolution of sentiment, nothing deliberate; he merely acted according to his habitual frame of mind; he did *not* go work, because it was contrary to his general character to work; only he did not know this. He said, “I go, Sir,” sincerely, from the feeling of the moment; but when the words were out of his mouth, then they were forgotten. It was like the wind blowing against a stream, which seems for a moment to change its course in consequence, but in fact flows down as before.

To this subject I shall now call your attention, as drawn from the latter part of this parable, passing over the case of the repentant son, which would form a distinct subject in itself. “He answered and said, I go, Sir; and went not.” We promise to serve God, we do not perform; and that, not from deliberate faithlessness in the particular case, but because it is our nature, our *way* not to obey, and *we* do not know

this ; we do not know ourselves, or what we are promising.—I will give several instances of this kind of weakness.

1. For instance ; that of mistaking good feelings for real religious principle. Consider how often this takes place. It is the case with the young necessarily, who have not been exposed to temptation. They have (we will say) been brought up religiously, they wish to be religious, and so are objects of our love and interest ; but they think themselves far more religious than they really are. They suppose they hate sin, and understand the Truth, and can resist the world, when they hardly know the meaning of the words they use. Again, how often is a man incited by circumstances to utter a virtuous wish, or propose a generous or valiant deed, and perhaps applauds himself for his own good feeling, and has no suspicion that he is not able to act upon it ! In truth, he does not understand where the real difficulty of his duty lies. He thinks that the characteristic of a religious man is his having correct notions. It escapes him that there is a great interval between feeling and acting. He takes it for granted he can do what he wishes. He knows he is a free-agent, and can on the whole do what he will ; but he is not conscious of the load of corrupt nature and sinful habits which hang upon his will, and clog it in each particular exercise of it. He has borne these so long, that he is insensible to their existence. He knows that in little things, where passion and inclination are excluded, he can perform as soon as he resolves. Should he meet in his walk two paths, to the right and left, he is sure he can take which he will at once, without any difficulty ; and he fancies that obedience to God is not much more difficult than to turn to the right instead of the left.

2. One especial case of this self-deception is seen in delaying repentance. A man says to himself, "Of course, if the worst comes to the worst, if illness comes, or at least old age, I can repent." I do not speak of the dreadful presumption of such a mode of quieting conscience, (though many persons really use it who do not speak the words out, or are aware that they act upon it,) but, merely, the ignorance it evidences concerning our moral condition, and our power of willing and doing. If men can repent, why do they not do so at once ? they answer, that "they intend to do so hereafter ;" i. e. they do *not* repent because they *can*. Such is their argument ; whereas, the very fact that they do not now, should make them suspect that there is a greater difference between intending and doing than they know of.

So very difficult is obedience, so hardly won is every step in our Christian course, so sluggish and inert our corrupt nature, that I would have a man disbelieve he can do one jot or tittle more than he has already done ; refrain from borrowing aught on the hope of the future,

however good a security for it he seems to be able to show ; and never take his good feelings and wishes in pledge for one single untried deed. Nothing but *past* acts are the vouchers for *future*. Past sacrifices, past labours, past victories over yourselves,—these, my brethren, are the tokens of those in store ; and doubtless of greater in store, for the path of the just is as the shining, growing light.* But trust nothing short of these. “Deeds, not words and wishes,” this must be the watch-word of your warfare and the ground of your assurance. But if you have done nothing firm and manly hitherto, if you are as yet the coward slave of Satan, and the poor creature of your lusts and passions, never suppose you will one day rouse yourselves from your indolence. Alas ! there are men who walk the road to hell, always the while looking back at heaven, and trembling as they pace forward towards their place of doom. They hasten on as under a spell, shrinking from the consequences of their own deliberate doings. Such was Balaam. What would he have given if words and feelings might have passed for deeds ! See how religious he was so far as profession goes ! How did he revere God in speech ! How piously express a desire to die the death of the righteous ! Yet he died in battle among God’s *enemies* ;—not suddenly overcome by temptation, only on the other hand, not suddenly turned to God by his good thoughts and fair purposes. But in this respect the power of sin differs from any literal spell or fascination, that we are, after all, willing slaves of it, and shall answer for following it. If “our iniquities, like the wind, take us away,”* yet we can help this.

Nor is it only among beginners in religious obedience that there is this great interval between promising and performing. We can never answer how we shall act under new circumstances. A very little knowledge of life and of our own hearts will teach us this. Men whom we meet in the world turn out, in the course of their trial, so differently from what their former conduct promised, they view things so differently *before* they were tempted and *after*, that we, who see and wonder at it, have abundant cause to look to ourselves, not to be “high-minded” but to “fear.” Even the most matured saints, those who imbibed in largest measure the power and fullness of Christ’s Spirit, and worked righteousness most diligently, in their day, could they have been thoroughly scanned even by man, would (I am persuaded) have exhibited inconsistencies such as to surprise and shock their most ardent disciples. After all, one good deed is scarcely the pledge of another, though I just now said it was. The best men are uncertain ; they are

* Prov. iv. 18.

† Isaiah lxiv. 6.

great, and they are little again ; they stand firm, and then fall. Such is human virtue ;—reminding us to call no one master on earth, but to look up to our sinless and perfect Lord ; reminding us to humble ourselves each within himself, and to reflect what we must appear to God, if even to ourselves and each other we seem so base and worthless ; and showing clearly that all who are saved, even the least inconsistent of us, can be saved only by faith, not by works.

3. Here I am reminded of another plausible form of the same error. It is a mistake concerning what is meant by faith. We know Scripture tells us that God accepts those who have faith in Him. Now the question is, What is faith, and how can a man tell that he *has* faith ? Some persons answer at once and without hesitation, that “to have faith, is to feel oneself to be nothing, and God everything ; it is to be convinced of sin, to be conscious one cannot save oneself, and to wish to be saved by Christ our Lord ; and that it is, moreover, to have the love of Him warm in one’s heart, and to rejoice in Him, to desire His glory, and to resolve to live to Him and not to the world.” But I will answer, with all due seriousness, as speaking on a serious subject, that this is *not* faith. Not that it is not necessary (it is very necessary) to be convinced, that we are laden with infirmity and sin, and without health in us, and to look for salvation solely to Christ’s blessed sacrifice on the cross ; and we may well be thankful if we are thus minded ; but that a man may feel all this that I have described, vividly, and still not yet possess one particle of true religious faith. Why ? Because there is an immeasurable distance between feeling right and doing right. A man may have all these good thoughts and emotions, yet, (if he has not yet hazarded them to the experiment of practice,) he cannot promise himself that he has any sound and permanent principle at all. If he has not yet acted upon them, we have no voucher, barely on *account* of them, to believe that they are any thing but words. Though a man spoke like an angel, I would not believe him, on the mere ground of his speaking. Nay, till he acts upon them, he has not even evidence to himself, that he has true living faith. Dead faith, (as St. James says,) profits no man. Of course ; the Devils have it. What, on the other hand, is *living* faith ? Do fervent thoughts make faith *living* ? St. James tells us otherwise. He tells us *works*, deeds of obedience, are the life of faith. “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”* So that those who think they really believe, because they have in word and thought surrendered themselves to God, are much too hasty in their judgment. They have done something, indeed, but not at all

* James ii. 26.

the most difficult part of their duty, which is to surrender themselves to God in deed and act. They have as yet done nothing to show they will not, after saying "I go," the next moment "go not;" nothing to show they will not act the part of the self-deceiving disciple, who said, "Though I die, with Thee, I will not deny Thee;" yet straightway went and denied Christ thrice. As far as we know any thing of the matter, justifying faith has no existence independent of its particular definite acts. It may be described to be the temper under which men obey; the humble and earnest desire to please Christ which causes and attends on actual services. He who does one little deed of obedience, whether he denies himself some comfort to relieve the sick and needy, or curbs his temper, or forgives an enemy, or asks forgiveness for an offence committed by him, or resists the clamour or ridicule of the world, such a one (as far as we are given to judge) evinces more true faith than could be shown by the most fluent religious conversation, the most intimate knowledge of Scripture doctrine, or the most remarkable agitation and change of religious sentiments. Yet how many are there who sit still with folded hands,* dreaming, doing nothing at all, thinking they have done every thing, or need do nothing, when they merely have had these good *thoughts*, which will save no one!

My object has been, as far as a few words can do it, to lead you to some true notion of the depths and deceitfulness of the heart, which we do not really know. It is easy to speak of human nature as corrupt in the general, to admit it in the general, and then get quit of the subject; as if, the doctrine being once admitted, there was nothing more to be done with it. But in truth we can have no real apprehension of the doctrine of our corruption, till we view the structure of our minds, part by part; and dwell upon and draw out the signs of our weakness, inconsistency, and ungodliness, which are such as can arise from nothing but some strange original defect in our moral nature.

1. Now it will be well if such self-examination as I have suggested leads us to the habit of constant dependence upon the Unseen God, in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." We are in the dark about ourselves. When we act, we are groping in the dark, and may meet with a fall any moment. Here and there, perhaps, we see a little;—or, in our attempts to influence and move our minds, we are making experiments (as it were) with some delicate and dangerous instrument, which works, we do not know how, and may produce unexpected and disastrous effects. The management of our heart is quite above us. Under these circumstances it becomes our comfort to look

* Prov. xxiv. 33.

up to God. "Thou, God, seest me!" Such was the consolation of the forlorn Hagar in the wilderness. He knoweth whereof we are made, and He alone can uphold us. He sees with most appalling distinctness all our sins, all the windings and recesses of evil within us; yet it is our only comfort to know this, and to trust Him for help against ourselves. To those who have a right notion of their weakness, the thought of their Almighty Sanctifier and Guide is continually present. They believe in the necessity of a spiritual influence to change and strengthen them, not as a mere abstract doctrine, but as a practical and most consolatory truth daily to be fulfilled in their warfare with sin and Satan.

2. And this conviction of our excessive weakness must further lead us to try ourselves continually in little things, in order to prove our own earnestness; ever to be suspicious of ourselves, and, not only to refrain from promising much, but actually to put ourselves to the test to keep ourselves wakeful. A sober mind never enjoys God's blessings to the full; it draws back and refuses a portion to show its command over itself. It denies itself in trivial circumstances, even if nothing is gained by denying, but an evidence of its own sincerity. It makes trial of its own professions; and if it has been tempted to say any thing noble and great, or to blame another for sloth or cowardice, it takes itself at its word, and resolves to make some sacrifice (if possible) in little things, as a price for the indulgence of fine speaking, or as a penalty on its censoriousness. Much would be gained if we adopted this rule, even in our professions of friendship and service one towards another; and never said a thing which we were not willing to do.

There is only one place where the Christian allows himself to profess openly, and that is in Church. Here, under the guidance of Apostles and Prophets, he says many things boldly, as speaking after them, and as before Him who searcheth the reins. There can be no harm in professing much directly to God, because, *while* we speak, we know He sees through our professions, and takes them for what they really are, *prayers*. How much, for instance, do we profess when we say the Creed! and in the Collects we put on the full character of a Christian. We desire and seek the best gifts, and declare our strong purpose to serve God with our whole hearts. By doing this, we remind ourselves of our duty; and withal, we humble ourselves by the taunt (so to call it) of putting upon our dwindled and unhealthy forms those ample and glorious garments which befit the upright and full-grown believer.

Lastly, we see, from the parable, what is the course and character of human obedience on the whole. There are two sides of it. I have taken the darker side; the case of profession without practice, of say-

ing "I go, Sir," and of not going. But what is the brighter side? Nothing better than to say, "I go not," and to repent and go. The more *common* condition of men is, not to know their inability to serve God, and readily to answer for themselves; and so they quietly pass through life, as if they had nothing to fear. Their best estate, what is it, but to rise more or less in rebellion against God, to resist His commandments and ordinances, and then poorly to make up for the mischief they have done, by repenting and obeying? Alas! to be alive as a Christian, is nothing better than to struggle against sin, to disobey and repent. There has been but One among the sons of men who has said and done *consistently*; who said, "I come to do Thy will, O God," and without delay or hindrance did it. He came to show us what human nature might become, if carried on to its perfection. Thus He teaches us to think highly of our nature as viewed in Him; not (as some do) to speak evil of our nature and exalt ourselves personally, but while we acknowledge *our own* distance from heaven, to view our *nature* as renewed in Him, as glorious and wonderful beyond our thoughts. Thus He teaches us to be hopeful; and encourages us while conscience abases us. Angels seem little in honour and dignity, compared with that nature which the Eternal Word has purified by His own union with it. Henceforth, we dare aspire to enter into the heaven of heavens, and to live for ever in God's presence, because the first fruits of our race is already there in the Person of His Only-begotten Son.

SERMON XIV.

RELIGIOUS EMOTION.

MARK xiv. 31.

"But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee I will not deny Thee in any wise."

IT is not my intention to make St. Peter's fall the direct subject of our consideration to-day, though I have taken this text; but to suggest to you an important truth, which that fall, together with other events at the same season, especially enforces; viz. that violent impulse is not the same as a firm *determination*,—that men may have their religious

feelings roused, without being on that account the more likely to obey God in practice, rather the less likely. This important truth is in various ways brought before our minds at the season sacred to the memory of Christ's betrayal and death. The contrast displayed in the Gospels between His behaviour on the one hand, as the time of His crucifixion drew near, and that both of His disciples and the Jewish populace on the other, is full of instruction, if we will receive it; *He* steadily fixing His face to endure those sufferings which were the atonement for our sins, yet without aught of mental excitement or agitation; His disciples and the Jewish multitude first protesting their devotion to Him in vehement language, then, the one deserting Him, the other even clamouring for His crucifixion. He entered Jerusalem in triumph; the multitude cutting down branches of palm-trees, and strewing them in the way, as in honour of a king and conqueror.* He had lately raised Lazarus from the dead; and so great a miracle had given Him great temporary favour with the populace. Multitudes flocked to Bethany to see Him and Lazarus;† and when He set out for Jerusalem where He was to suffer, they, little thinking they would soon cry, "Crucify Him," went out to meet Him with palm-branches, and hailing Him as their Messiah, led Him on into the holy city. Here was an instance of a *popular* excitement. The next instance of excited feeling is found in that melancholy self-confidence of St. Peter, contained in the text. When our Saviour foretold Peter's trial and fall, Peter at length "spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise." Yet in a little while both the people and the Apostle abandoned their Messiah; the ardour of their devotion had run its course.

Now, it may, perhaps, appear as if the circumstance I am pointing out, remarkable as it is, still is one on which it is of little use to dwell, when addressing a mixed congregation, on the ground that most men feel too *little* about religion. And it may be thence argued, that the aim of Christian teaching rather should be to rouse them from insensibility, than to warn them against excess of religious feeling. I answer, that to mistake mere transient emotion, or mere good thoughts for obedience, is a far commoner deceit than at first sight appears. How many a man is there, who, when his conscience upbraids him for neglect of duty, comforts himself with the reflection that he has never treated the subject of religion with open scorn,—that he has from time to time had serious thoughts,—that on certain solemn occasions he has been affected and awed,—that he has at times been moved to earnest prayer to God,

* Matt. xxi. 8. John xii. 13.

† John xii. 1—18.

—that he has had accidentally some serious conversation with a friend ! This, I say, is a case of frequent occurrence among men called Christian. Again, there is a further reason for insisting upon this subject. No one (it is plain) can be religious without having his heart in his religion ; his affections must be actively engaged in it ; and it is the aim of all Christian instruction to promote this. But if so, doubtless, there is great danger lest a perverse use should be made of the affections. In proportion as a religious duty is difficult, so is it open to abuse. For the very reason, then, that I desire to make you earnest in religion, must I also warn you against a counterfeit earnestness, which often misleads men from the plain path of obedience, and which most men are apt to fall into just on their first awakening to a serious consideration of their duty. It is not enough to bid you serve Christ in faith, fear, love, and gratitude ; care must be taken that it is the faith, fear, love, and gratitude of a sound mind. That vehement tumult of zeal which St. Peter felt before his trial failed him under it. The open-mouthed admiration of the populace at our Saviour's miracle was suddenly changed to blasphemy. This may happen now as then ; and it often happens in a way distressing to the Christian teacher. He finds it is far easier to interest men in the subject of religion, (hard though this be,) than to rule the spirit which he has excited. His hearers, when their attention is gained, soon begin to think he does not go far enough ; then they seek means which he will not supply, of encouraging and indulging their mere feelings, to the neglect of humble practical efforts to serve God. After a time, like the multitude, they suddenly turn round to the world, abjuring Christ altogether, or denying Him with Peter, or gradually sinking into a mere form of obedience, while they still think themselves true Christians, and secure of the favour of Almighty God.

For these reasons I think it is as important to warn men against impetuous feelings in religion, as to urge them to give their heart to it. I proceed, therefore, to explain more fully what is the connexion between strong emotions and sound Christian principle, and how far they are consistent with it.

Now that perfect state of mind, at which we must aim, and which the Holy Spirit imparts, is a deliberate preference of God's service to every thing else, a determined resolution to give up all for Him, and a love for Him, not tumultuous and passionate, but such a love as a child bears towards his parents, calm, full, reverent, contemplative, obedient. Here, however, it may be objected, that this is not always possible : that we cannot help feeling emotion at times ; that, even, to take the case of parents and children, a man is at certain times thrown out of that

quiet affection which he bears towards his father and mother, and is agitated by various feelings; again, that zeal, for instance, though a Christian virtue, is almost inseparable from ardour and passion. To this I reply, that I am not describing the state of mind to which any one of us has *attained*, when I say it is altogether calm and meditative, but that which is the *perfect* state, that which we should aim at. I know it *is* often impossible, for various reasons, to avoid being agitated and excited; but the question before us is, whether we should *think much* of violent emotion, whether we should encourage it. Doubtless it is no sin to feel at times passionately on the subject of religion; it is natural in some men, and under certain circumstances it is praiseworthy in others. But these are accidents. As a general rule, the more religious men become, the calmer they become; and at all times the religious principle, viewed by itself, is calm, sober, and deliberate.

Let us review some of the accidental circumstances I speak of.

1. The natural tempers of men vary very much. Some men have ardent imaginations and strong feelings; and adopt, as a matter of course, a vehement mode of expressing themselves. No doubt it is impossible to make all men think and feel alike. Such men of course may possess deep-rooted principle. All I would maintain is, that their ardour does not of itself make their faith deeper and more genuine; that they must not think themselves better than others on account of it; that they must beware of considering it a proof of their real earnestness, instead of narrowly searching into their conduct for the satisfactory *fruits* of faith.

2. Next, there are, besides, particular occasions on which excited feeling is natural, and even commendable; but not for its own sake, but *on account* of the peculiar circumstances under which it occurs. For instance; it is natural for a man to feel especial remorse at his sins when he first begins to think of religion; he *ought* to feel bitter sorrow and keen repentance. But all such emotion evidently is not the highest state of a Christian's mind; it is but the first stirring of grace in him. A sinner, indeed, can do no better; but in proportion as he learns more of the power of true religion, such agitation will wear away. What is this but saying, that repentance is only the inchoate state of a Christian? Who doubts that sinners are bound to repent and turn to God? yet the Angels have no repentance; and who denies their peacefulness of soul to be a higher excellence than ours? The woman who had been a sinner, when she came behind our Lord wept much, and washed his feet with tears.* It was well done in her; she

* Luke vii. 38.

did what she could ; and was honoured with her Saviour's praise. Yet it is clear this was not a permanent state of mind. It was but the first step in religion, and would doubtless wear away. It was but the accident of a season. Had her faith no deeper root than this emotion, it would have soon come to an end, as Peter's zeal.

In like manner, whenever we fall into sin, (and how often is this the case !) the truer our faith is, the more we shall for the time be distressed, perhaps agitated. No doubt ; yet it would be a strange procedure to make much of this disquietude. Though it is a bad sign if we do not feel it according to our mental temperament, yet if we do, what then ? It argues no high Christian excellence ; I repeat it, it is but the virtue of a very imperfect state. Bad is the best offering we can offer to God after sinning. On the other hand, the more consistent our habitual obedience, the less we shall be subject to such feelings.

3. And further, the accidents of life will occasionally agitate us :—affliction and pain ; bad news ; though here, too, the Psalmist describes the higher excellence of mind, viz. the calm confidence of the believer, who is “not afraid of evil tidings,” *for* “his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”* Times of persecution will agitate the mind ; circumstances of especial interest in the fortunes of the Church will cause anxiety and fear. We see the influence of some of these causes in various parts of St. Paul's Epistles. Such emotion, however, is not the essence of true faith, though it accidentally accompanies it. In times of distress religious men will speak more openly on the subject of religion, and lay bare their feelings ; at other times they will conceal them. They are neither better nor worse for so doing.

Now all this may be illustrated from Scripture. We find the same prayers offered, and the same resolutions expressed by good men, sometimes in a calm way, sometimes with more ardour. How quietly and simply does Agur offer his prayer to God ! “Two things have I required of Thee ; deny me them not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me.” St. Paul, on the other hand, with greater fervency, because he was in more distressing circumstances, but with not more acceptableness on that account in God's sight, says, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ;” and so he proceeds. Again, Joshua says, simply but firmly, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” St. Paul says as firmly, but with more emotion, when his friends besought him to keep away from Jerusalem :—“What, mean

* Psalm cxii. 7

ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Observe how calm Job is in his resignation: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And on the other hand, how calmly that same Apostle expresses his assurance of salvation at the close of his life, who, during the struggle, was accidentally agitated:—"I am now ready to be offered. . . . I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."*

These remarks may suffice to show the relation which excited feelings bear to true religious principle. They are sometimes natural, sometimes suitable; but they are not religion itself. They come and go. They are not to be counted on, or encouraged; for, as in St. Peter's case, they may supplant true faith, and lead to self-deception. They will gradually lose their place within us as our obedience becomes confirmed;—partly because those men are kept in perfect peace, and sheltered from all agitating feelings, whose minds are stayed on God;† partly because these feelings themselves are fixed into habits by the power of faith, and instead of coming and going, and agitating the mind from their suddenness, they are permanently retained so far as there is any thing good in them, and give a deeper colour and a more energetic expression to the Christian character.

Now, it will be observed, that in these remarks I have taken for granted, as not needing proof, that the highest Christian temper is free from all vehement and tumultuous feeling. But, if we wish some evidence of this, let us turn to our Great Pattern, Jesus Christ, and examine what was the character of that perfect holiness which He alone of all men ever displayed.

And can we find any where such calmness and simplicity as marked His devotion and His obedience? When does He ever speak with fervour or vehemence? Or, if there be one or two words of His in His mysterious agony and death, characterized by an energy which we do not comprehend and which sinners must silently adore, still how conspicuous and undeniable is His composure in the general tenour of His words and conduct! Consider the prayer He gave us; and this is the more to the purpose, for the very reason that He has given it as a model for our worship. How plain and unadorned is it! How few are the words of it! How grave and solemn the petitions! What an

* Prov. xxxi. 7, 8. Phil. iv. 11, 12. Josh. xxiv. 15. Acts, xxi. 13. Job, i. xxi. 2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

† Isaiah xxvi. 3.

entire absence of tumult and feverish emotion! Surely our own feelings tell us, it could not be otherwise. To suppose it otherwise were an irreverence towards Him.—At another time when He is said to have “rejoiced in spirit,” His thanksgiving is marked with the same undisturbed tranquillity. “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”—Again, think of His prayer in the garden. He then was in distress of mind beyond our understanding. Something there was, we know not what, which weighed heavy upon Him. He prayed He might be spared the extreme bitterness of His trial. Yet how subdued and how concise is His petition! “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee: take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.”* And this is but one instance, though a chief one, of that deep tranquillity of mind, which is conspicuous throughout the solemn history of the Atonement. Read John xiii., in which He is described as washing His disciples’ feet, Peter’s in particular. Reflect upon His serious words addressed at several times to Judas who betrayed Him; and His conduct when seized by His enemies, when brought before Pilate, and lastly, when suffering on the cross. When does He set us an example of passionate devotion, of enthusiastic wishes, or of intemperate words?

Such is the lesson our Saviour’s conduct teaches us. Now let me remind you, how diligently we are taught the same by our own Church. Christ gave us a prayer to guide us in praying to the Father; and upon this model our own Liturgy is strictly formed. You will look in vain in the Prayer-book for long or vehement Prayers! for it is but upon occasions that agitation of mind is right, but there is ever a call upon us for seriousness, gravity, simplicity, deliberate trust, deep-seated humility. Many persons, doubtless, think the Church prayers, for this very reason, cold and formal. They do not discern their high perfection, and they think they could easily write better prayers. When such opinions are advanced, it is quite sufficient to turn our thoughts to our Saviour’s precept and example. It cannot be denied that those who thus speak, ought to consider our Lord’s prayer defective; and sometimes they are profane enough to think so, and to confess they think so. But I pass this by. Granting for argument’s sake His *precepts* were intentionally defective, as delivered before the Holy Ghost descended, yet what will they say to His *example*? Can even the fullest light of the Gospel revealed after His resurrection, bring us His fol-

* Luke x. 21. Mark xiv. 36.

lowers into the remotest resemblance to our blessed Lord's holiness? yet how calm was He, who was perfect man, in His own obedience!

To conclude:—Let us take warning from St Peter's fall. Let us not promise much; let us not talk much of ourselves; let us not be high-minded, nor encourage ourselves in impetuous bold language in religion. Let us take warning, too, from that fickle multitude who cried, first Hosanna, then Crucify. A miracle startled them, into a sudden adoration of their Saviour;—its effect upon them soon died away. And thus the especial mercies of God sometimes excite us for a season. We feel Christ speaking to us through our consciences and hearts; and we fancy He is assuring us we are His true servants, when He is but calling on us to receive Him. Let us not be content with saying "Lord, Lord," without "doing the things which He says." The husbandman's son who said, "I go, sir," yet went not to the vineyard, gained nothing by his fair words. One secret act of self-denial, one sacrifice of inclination to duty, is worth all the mere good thoughts, warm feelings, passionate prayers, in which idle people indulge themselves. It will give us more comfort on our death-bed to reflect on one deed of self-denying mercy, purity, or humility, than to recollect the shedding of many tears, and the recurrence of frequent transports, and much spiritual exultation. These latter feelings come and go; they may or may not accompany hearty obedience; they are never tests of it; but good actions are the fruits of faith, and assure us that we are Christ's; they comfort us as an evidence of the Spirit working in us. By them we shall be judged at the last day; and though they have no worth in themselves, by reason of that infection of sin which gives its character to every thing we do, yet they will be accepted for His sake, who bore the agony in the garden and suffered as a sinner on the cross.

SERMON XV.

RELIGIOUS FAITH RATIONAL.

ROMANS iv. 20, 21.

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform.”

THERE are serious men who are in the habit of describing Christian Faith as a feeling or a principle such as ordinary persons cannot enter into; a something strange and peculiar in its very nature, different in kind from every thing that affects and influences us in matters of this world, and not admitting any illustration from our conduct in them. They consider that, because it is a spiritual gift, and heavenly in its origin, it is therefore altogether superhuman; and that to compare it to any of our natural principles or feelings, is to think unworthily of it. And thus they lead others, who wish an excuse for their own irreligious lives, to speak of Christian Faith as extravagant and irrational, as if it were a mere fancy or feeling, which some persons had and others had not; and which, accordingly, could only, and would necessarily, be felt by those who were disposed that certain way. Now, that the *object* on which Faith fixes our thoughts, that the doctrines of Scripture are *most* marvellous and exceeding in glory, unheard and unthought of elsewhere, is quite true; and it is also true that no mind of man will form itself to a habit of Faith without the preventing and assisting influences of Divine Grace. But it is not at all true that Faith itself, i. e. Trust, is a strange principle of action; and to say that it is irrational is even an absurdity. I mean such a Faith as that of Abraham, mentioned in the text, which led him to believe God's word when opposed to his own experience. And it shall now be my endeavour to show this.

To hear some men speak, (I mean men who scoff at religion,) it might be thought we never acted on Faith or Trust, except in religious matters; whereas we are acting on trust every hour of our lives. When faith is said to be a religious principle, it is (I repeat) the things believed, not the act of believing them, which is peculiar to religion. Let us take some examples.

It is obvious we trust our *memory*. We do not now witness what we saw yesterday ; yet we have no doubt it took place in the way we *remember*. We recollect clearly the circumstances of morning and afternoon. Our confidence in our memory is so strong, that a man might reason with us all day long, without persuading us that we slept through the day, or that we returned from a long journey, when our memory deposes otherwise. Thus we have faith in our memory ; yet what is irrational here ?

Again, even when we use reasoning, and are convinced of any thing by reasoning, what is it but that we trust the general soundness of our reasoning powers ? From knowing one thing we think we can be sure about another, even though we do not see it. Who of us would doubt, on seeing strong shadows on the ground, that the sun was shining out, though our face happened to be turned the other way ? Here is faith without sight ; but there is nothing against reason here, unless reason can be against itself.

And what I wish you particularly to observe, is, that we continually trust our memory and our reasoning powers in this way, though *they often deceive us*. This is worth observing, because it is sometimes said that we cannot be *certain* our faith in religion is not a mistake. I say our memory and reason often deceive us ; yet no one says it is therefore absurd and irrational to continue to trust them ; and for this plain reason, because *on the whole* they are true and faithful witnesses, because it is only *at times* that they mislead us ; so that the chance is, that they are right in this case or that, which happens to be before us ; and (again) because in all practical matters we are obliged to dwell upon not what *may be possibly*, but what is *likely* to be. In matters of daily life, we have no time for fastidious and perverse fancies about the minute chances of our being deceived. We are obliged to act at once, or we should cease to live. There is a chance (it cannot be denied) that our food to-day may be poisonous,—we cannot be quite certain,—but it looks the same and tastes the same, and we have good friends round us ; so we do not abstain from it, for all this chance, though it is real. This necessity of acting promptly is our happiness in this world's matters ; in the concerns of a future life, alas ! we have time for carnal and restless thoughts about possibilities. And this is our *trial* ; and it will be our condemnation, if with the experience of the folly of such idle fancyings about what may be, in matters of this life, we yet indulge them as regards the future. If it be said, that we sometimes do distrust our reasoning powers, for instance, when they lead us to some unexpected conclusion, or again our memory, when another's memory contradicts it, this only shows that there *are* things which we should be weak or

hasty in believing; which is quite true. Doubtless there is such a fault as credulity, or believing too readily and too much, (and this, in religion, we call superstition,) but this neither shows that *all* trust is irrational, nor again that trust is necessarily irrational, which is founded on what is but likely to be and may be denied without an actual absurdity. Indeed, when we come to examine the subject, it will be found that, strictly speaking, we know little more than that we exist, and that there is an Unseen Power whom we are bound to obey. Beyond this we must *trust*; and first our senses, memory, and reasoning powers; then other authorities:—so that, in fact, almost all we do, every day of our lives, is on trust, i. e. *faith*.

But it may be said, that belief in these informants, our senses, and the like, is not what is commonly meant by faith;—that to trust our senses and reason is in fact nothing more than to trust ourselves;—and though these do sometimes mislead us, yet they are so continually about us, and so at command, that we can use them to correct each other; so that on the whole we gain from these the truth of things quite well enough to act upon;—that on the other hand it is a very different thing from this to trust another person; and that faith, in the Scripture sense of the word, is trusting another, and therefore is not proved to be rational by the foregoing illustrations.

Let us, then, understand faith in this sense of *reliance on the words of another*, as opposed to trust in oneself. This is the common meaning of the word, I grant;—as when we contrast it to sight and to reason; and yet what I have already said has its use in reminding men who are eager for demonstration in matters of religion, that there are difficulties in matters of sense and reasoning also. But to proceed as I have proposed.—It is easy to show, that, even considering faith as trust in another, it is no irrational or strange principle of conduct in the concerns of this life.

For when we consider the subject attentively, how few things there are which we can ascertain for ourselves by our own senses and reason! After all, what *do* we know without trusting others? We know that we are in a certain state of health, in a certain place, have been alive for a certain number of years, have certain principles and likings, have certain persons around us, and perhaps have in our lives travelled to certain places at a distance. But what do we know more? Are there not towns (we will say) within fifty or sixty miles of us which we have never seen, and which, nevertheless, we fully believe to be, as we have heard them described? To extend our view;—we know that land stretches in every direction of us, a certain number of miles, and then there is sea on all sides; that we are in an island. But who has *seen*

the land all around and has proved for himself that the fact is so? What, then, convinces us of it? the *report of others*,—this trust, this faith in testimony, which, when religion is concerned, then, and only then, the proud and sinful would fain call irrational.

And what I have instanced in one set of facts, which we believe, is equally true of numberless others, of almost all which we think we know.

Consider how men in the business of life, nay, all of us, confide, are obliged to confide, in persons we never saw, or know but slightly; nay, in their hand-writings, which, for what we know, may be *forged*, if we are to speculate and fancy what *may be*. We act upon our trust in them implicitly, because common sense tells us that with proper caution and discretion, faith in others is perfectly safe and rational. Scripture, then, only bids us act in respect to a future life, as we are every day acting at present. Or, again, how certain we all are (when we think on the subject) that we must sooner or later die? No one seriously thinks he can escape death; and men dispose of their property and arrange their affairs, confidently contemplating, not indeed the exact time of their death, still death as sooner or later to befall them. Of course they do; it would be most irrational in them not to expect it. Yet observe, *what proof* has any one of us that he shall die? because other men die? how does he know that? has he seen them die? he can know nothing of what took place before he was born, nor of what happens in other countries. How little, indeed, he knows about it at all, except that it is a *received fact*, and except that it would, in truth, be idle to doubt what mankind as a *whole* witness, though each individual has only his proportionate share in the universal testimony! And, further, we constantly believe things even against our own judgment; i. e. when we think our informant likely to know more about the matter under consideration than ourselves, which is the precise case in the question of religious faith. And thus from reliance on others we acquire knowledge of all kinds, and proceed to reason, judge, decide, act, form plans for the future. And in all this (I say) *trust* is at the bottom; and this the world calls *prudence* (and rightly); and not to trust, and act upon trust, *imprudence*, or (it may be) headstrong folly, or *madness*.

But it is needless to proceed; the world could not go on without it. The most distressing event that can happen to a state is (we know) the spreading of a want of confidence between man and man. Distrust, *want of faith*, breaks the very bonds of human society. Now, then, shall we account it only rational for a man, when he is ignorant, to believe his fellow-man, nay, to yield to another's judgment as better than his

own, and yet think it *against reason* when one, like Abraham, gives ear to the Word of God, and sets the promise of God above his own short-sighted expectation? Abraham, it is true, rested in hope beyond hope, in the hope afforded by a Divine promise beyond that hope suggested by nature. He had fancied he never should have a son, and God promised him a son. But might he not well address those self-wise persons who neglect to walk in the steps of his faith, in the language of just reproof? "If we receive the witness of *men*," (he might well urge with the Apostle, "the witness of *God* is greater.")* Therefore, he "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform."

But it may be objected; "True, if we *knew for certain* God had spoken to us as He did to Abraham, it were then madness indeed in us to disbelieve Him; but it is not *His voice* we hear, but *man's* speaking in His name. The Church tells us, that God has revealed to man His will; and the Ministers of the Church point to a book which they say is holy, and contains the words of God. How are we to know whether they speak truth or not? To believe this, is it according to reason or against it?"

This objection brings us to a very large and weighty question, though I do not think it is, generally speaking, a very practical one; viz. what are our reasons for believing the Bible came from God? If any one asks this in a scoffing way, he is not to be answered; for he is profane, and exposes himself to the curse pronounced by St. Paul upon the haters of the Lord Jesus. But if a man inquires sincerely, wishing to find the truth, waiting on God humbly, yet perplexed at knowing or witnessing the deeds of scorners and daring blasphemers, and at hearing their vain reasonings, and not knowing what to think or say about them, let him consider the following remarks, with which I conclude.

Now, first, whatever such profane persons may say about their willingness to believe, if they could find reason,—however willing they may profess themselves to admit that we daily take things on trust, and that to act on faith is in itself quite a rational procedure,—though they may pretend that they do not quarrel with being required to believe, but say that they do think it hard that better evidence is not given them for believing what they are bid believe undoubtingly, the divine authority of the Bible,—in spite of all this, depend upon it, (in a very great many cases,) they *do* murmur at being required to believe, they *do* dislike being bound to act without seeing, they *do* prefer to

* 1 John v. 9.

trust themselves to trusting God, even though it *could* be plainly proved to them that God was in truth speaking to them. Did they see God, did He show Himself as He will appear at the last day, still they would be faithful to their own miserable and wretched selves, and would be practically disloyal to the authority of God. Their conduct shows this. Why otherwise do they so frequently scoff at religious men, as if timid and narrow-minded, merely because they fear to sin? Why do they ridicule such conscientious persons as will not swear, or jest indecorously, or live dissolutely? Clearly, it is their very faith itself they ridicule; not their believing on false grounds, but their believing at all. Here they show what it is which rules them within. They do not like the tie of religion; they do not like dependence. To trust another, much more to trust him implicitly, is to acknowledge oneself to be his inferior; and this man's proud nature cannot bear to do. He is apt to think it unmanly, and to be ashamed of it; he promises himself liberty by breaking the chain (as he considers it) which binds him to his Maker and Redeemer. You will say, why then do such men trust each other if they are so proud? I answer, that they cannot help it; and, again, that while they trust, they are trusted in turn; which puts them on a sort of equality with others. Unless this mutual dependence takes place, it is true, they cannot bear to be bound to trust another, to depend on him. And this is the reason that such men are so given to cause tumults and rebellions in national affairs. They set up some image of freedom in their minds, a freedom from the shackles of dependence, which they think their natural right, and which they aim to gain for themselves; a liberty, much like that which Satan aspired after, when he rebelled against God. So, let these men profess what they will, about their not finding fault with Faith on its own account, they do dislike it. And it is therefore very much to our purpose to accustom our minds to the fact, on which I have been insisting, that almost every thing we do is grounded on mere trust in others. We are from our birth dependent creatures, utterly dependent; dependent immediately on man; and that visible dependence reminds us forcibly of our truer and fuller dependence upon God.

Next, I observe, that these unbelieving men, who use hard words against Scripture, condemn themselves out of their own mouth;—in this way. It is a mistake to suppose that our obedience to God's will is merely founded on our belief in the word of such persons as tell us Scripture came from God. We obey God primarily because we actually feel His presence in our consciences bidding us obey Him. And this, I say, confutes these objectors on their own ground; because the very reason they give for their unbelief, is, that they trust their own

sight and reason, because their own, more than the words of God's Ministers. Now, let me ask, if they trust their senses and their reason, why do they not trust their conscience too? Is not conscience their own? Their conscience is as much a part of themselves as their reason is; and it is placed within them by Almighty God in order to balance the influence of sight and reason; and yet they will not attend to it; for a plain reason,—they love sin,—they love to be their own masters, and therefore they will not attend to that secret whisper of their hearts, which tells them they are *not* their own masters, and that sin is hateful and ruinous.

Nothing shows this more plainly than their conduct, if ever you appeal to their conscience in favour of your view of the case. Supposing they are using profane language, murmurings, or scoffings at religion; and supposing a man says to them, "You *know* in your heart you should not do so;" how will they reply? They immediately get angry; or they attempt to turn what is said into ridicule; any thing will they do, except answer by *reasoning*. No; their boasted argumentation then fails them. It flies like a coward before the slight stirring of conscience; and their passions, these are the only champions left for their defence. They in effect say, "We do so, because we like it:" perhaps they even *avow* this in so many words. "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*

And are such the persons whom any Christian can in any degree trust? Surely faith in them would be of all conceivable confidences the most irrational, the most misplaced. Can we allow ourselves to be perplexed and frightened at the words of those who carry upon them the tokens of their own inconsistency, the mark of Cain? Surely not; and as that first rebel's mark was set on him, "lest any finding him should kill him," in like manner their presence but reminds us thereby to view them with love, though most sorrowfully, and to pray earnestly, and do our utmost, (if there is ought we can do) that they may be spared the second death;—to look on them with awe, as a land cursed by God, the plain of Siddim or the ruins of Babel, but which He, for our Redeemer's sake, is able to renew and fertilize.

For ourselves, let us but obey God's voice in our hearts, and I will venture to say we shall have no doubts practically formidable about the truth of Scripture. Find out the man who strictly obeys the law within him, and yet is an unbeliever as regards the Bible, and then it

* Isa. xliv. 20.

will be time enough to consider all that variety of proof by which the truth of the Bible is confirmed to us. This is no practical inquiry for *us*. Our doubts, if we have any, will be found to arise after *disobedience*; it is bad company or corrupt books which lead to unbelief. It is sin which quenches the Holy Spirit.

And if we but obey God strictly, in time (through His blessing) faith will become like sight; we shall have no more difficulty in finding what will please God than in moving our limbs, or in understanding the conversation of our familiar friends. This is the blessedness of confirmed obedience. Let us aim at attaining it; and in whatever proportion we now enjoy it, praise and bless God for His unspeakable gift.

S E R M O N X V I .

THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES.

JOHN iii. 9.

“How can these things be?”

THERE is much instruction conveyed in the circumstance, that the Feast of the Holy Trinity immediately succeeds that of Whit Sunday. On the latter Festival we commemorate the coming of the Spirit of God, who is promised to us as the source of all spiritual knowledge and discernment. But lest we should forget the nature of that illumination which He imparts, Trinity Sunday follows to tell us what it is not; not a light according to the reason, the gifts of the intellect; inasmuch as the Gospel has its mysteries, its difficulties, and secret things, which the Holy Spirit does not remove.

The grace promised us is given, not that we may know more, but that we may do better. It is given to influence, guide, and strengthen us in performing our duty towards God and man; it is given to us as creatures, as sinners, as men, as immortal beings, not as mere reasoners, disputers, or philosophical inquirers. It teaches us what we are, whither we are going, what we must do, how we must do it; it enables

us to change our fallen nature from evil to good, "to make ourselves a new heart and a new spirit." But it tells us nothing for the *sake* of telling it; neither in His Holy Word nor through our consciences has the blessed Spirit thought fit so to act. Not that the desire of knowing sacred things for the sake of knowing them is wrong. As knowledge about earth, sky, and sea, and the wonders they contain, is in itself valuable, and in its place desirable, so doubtless there is nothing sinful in gazing wistfully at the marvellous providences of God's moral governance, and wishing to understand them. But still God has not given us such knowledge in the Bible; and therefore to look into the Bible for such knowledge, or to expect it in any way from the inward teaching of the Holy Ghost, is a dangerous mistake, and (it may be) a sin. And since men are apt to prize knowledge above holiness, therefore it is most suitably provided, that Trinity Sunday should succeed Whit Sunday; to warn us that the enlightening vouchsafed to us is not an understanding of "all mysteries and all knowledge," but that love or charity which is "the fulfilling of the Law."

And in matter of fact there have been very grievous mistakes respecting the nature of Christian knowledge. There have been at all times men so ignorant of the object of Christ's coming, as to consider mysteries inconsistent with the light of the Gospel. They have thought the darkness of Judaism, of which Scripture speaks, to be a state of intellectual ignorance; and Christianity to be, what they term, a "rational religion." And hence they have argued, that no doctrine which was *mysterious*, i. e. too deep for human reason, or inconsistent with their self-devised notions, could be contained in Scripture; as if it were honouring Christ to maintain that when He said a thing, He could not have meant what He said, because *they* would not have said it. Nicodemus, though a sincere inquirer, and (as the event shows) a true follower of Christ, yet at first was startled at the mysteries of the Gospel. He said to Christ, "How can these things be?" He felt the temptation, and overcame it. But there are others who are altogether offended and fall away on being exposed to it; as those mentioned in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, who went back and walked no more with Him.

The Feast of Trinity succeeds Pentecost; the light of the Gospel does not remove mysteries in religion. This is our subject. Let us enlarge upon it.

1. Let us consider such difficulties of religion, as press upon us independently of the Scriptures. Now we shall find the Gospel has not removed these; they remain as great as before Christ came.—How excellent is this world! how very good and fair is the face of nature!

how pleasant it is to walk into the green country, and to meditate in the field at the eventide !”* As we look around, we cannot but be persuaded that God is most good, and loves His creatures ; yet amid all the splendour we see around us, and the happy beings, thousands and ten thousands, which live in the air and water, the question comes upon us, “ But *why is there pain in the world ?*” We see that the brutes prey on each other, inflicting violent, unnatural deaths. Some of them, too, are enemies of man, and harm us when they have an opportunity. And man tortures others unrelentingly, nay, condemns some of them to a life of suffering. Much more do pain and misery show themselves in the history of man ;—the numberless diseases and casualties of human life, and our sorrows of mind ;—then, further, the evils we inflict on each other, our sins and their awful consequences. Now why does God permit so much evil in His own world ? This is a difficulty, I say, which we feel at once, before we open the Bible ; and which we are quite unable to solve. We open the Bible ; the fact is acknowledged there, but it is not explained at all. We are told that sin entered into the world *through the Devil*, who tempted Adam to disobedience ; so that God created the world good, *though* evil is in it. But why He thought fit to *suffer* this we are not told. We know no more on the subject than we did before opening the Bible. It was a mystery before God gave His revelation, it is as great a mystery now ; and doubtless for this reason, because knowledge about it would do us no good, it would merely satisfy curiosity. It is not practical knowledge.

2. Nor, again, are the difficulties of Judaism removed by Christianity. The Jews were told, that if they put to death certain animals, they should be admitted by way of consequence into God’s favour, which their continual transgressions were ever forfeiting. Now there was something mysterious here. How should the death of unoffending creatures make God gracious to the Jews ? They could not tell, of course. All that could be said to the point was, that in the daily course of human affairs the unoffending constantly suffer instead of the offenders. One man is ever suffering for the fault of another. But this experience did not lighten the difficulty of so mysterious a provision. It was still a mystery that God’s favour should depend on the death of brute animals. Does Christianity solve this difficulty ? No ; it continues it. The Jewish sacrifices indeed are done away, but still there remains One Great Sacrifice for sin, infinitely higher and more sacred than all other conceivable sacrifices. According

* Gen. xxiv. 63.

to the Gospel message, Christ has voluntarily suffered, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Here is the mystery continued. Why was this suffering necessary to procure for us the blessings which we were in ourselves unworthy of? We do not know. We should not be better men for knowing why God did not pardon us without Christ's death; so He has not told us. One suffers for another in the ordinary course of things; and under the Jewish Law, too; and in the Christian scheme; and why all this, is still a mystery.

Another difficulty to a thoughtful Israelite would arise from considering the state of the heathen world. Why did not Almighty God bring all nations into His Church, and teach them, by direct revelation, the sin of idol worship? He would not be able to answer. God had chosen one nation. It is true the same principle of preferring one to another is seen in the system of the whole world. God gives men unequal advantages, comforts, education, talents, health. Yet this does not satisfy us, *why* He has thought fit to do so at all. Here, again, the Gospel recognises and confirms the mysterious fact. *We* are born in a Christian country, others are not; *we* are baptized; *we* are educated; others are not. We are favoured *above* others. But why? We cannot tell; no more than the Jews could tell why they were favoured;—and for this reason, because to know it is nothing to us; it would not make us better men to know it. It is intended that we should look to ourselves, and rather consider why we have privileges given us, than why others have not the same. Our Saviour repels such curious questions more than once. "Lord, and what shall this man do?"* St. Peter asked about St. John. Christ replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, *what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.*"

Thus the Gospel gives us no advantages in respect to mere *barren knowledge*, above the Jew, or above the unenlightened heathen.

8. Nay, we may proceed to say, further than this, *that it increases our difficulties*. It is indeed a remarkable circumstance, that the very revelation that brings us *practical and useful knowledge* about our souls, in the very *act of doing* so, nay, (as it would seem) in *consequence of doing so*, brings us mysteries. We gain spiritual light at the price of intellectual perplexity; a blessed exchange doubtless, (for which is better, to be well and happy within ourselves, or to know what is going on at the world's end?) still at the price of perplexity. For instance, how infinitely important and blessed is the news of eternal happiness? but we learn in connexion with this joyful truth, that there is a *state of endless misery* too. Now, how great a mystery is this! yet the difficulty

* John xxi. 21, 22.

goes hand in hand with the spiritual blessing. It is still more strikingly to the point to refer to the message of mercy itself. We are saved by the death of Christ; but who is Christ? Christ is the Very Son of God, Begotten of God and One with God from everlasting, God incarnate. This is our inexpressible comfort, and a most sanctifying truth if we receive it rightly; but how stupendous a mystery *is* the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God! Here, not merely do the good tidings and the mystery go together, as in the revelation of eternal life and eternal death, but the very doctrine which *is* the mystery, brings the comfort also. Weak, ignorant, sinful, desponding, sorrowful man, gains the knowledge of an infinitely merciful Protector, a Giver of all good, most powerful, the Worker of all righteousness within him; at what price? at the price of a mystery. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory;" and he laid down His life for the world. What rightly disposed mind but will gladly make the exchange, and exclaim in the language of one whose words are almost sacred among us, "Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury whatsoever; it is our comfort and our wisdom. We care for no *knowledge* in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the Son of man and that men are made the righteousness of God."*

The same singular connexion between religious light and comfort, and intellectual darkness, is also seen in the doctrine of the Trinity. Frail man requires pardon and sanctification; can he do otherwise than gratefully devote himself to, and trust implicitly in his Redeemer and his Sanctifier? But if our Redeemer were not God, and our Sanctifier were not God, how great would have been our danger of preferring creatures to the Creator! What a source of light, freedom, and comfort is it, to know we cannot love Them too much, or humble ourselves before Them too reverently, for both Son and Spirit are separately God! Such is the *practical* effect of the doctrine; but what a mystery also is therein involved! What a source of perplexity and darkness (I say) to the reason, is the doctrine which immediately results from it! for if Christ be by Himself God, and the Spirit be by Himself God, and yet there be but One God, here is plainly something altogether beyond our comprehension; and, though, we might have antecedently supposed there were numberless truths relating to Almighty God which we could neither know nor understand, yet certain as this is, it does not make this mystery at all less overpowering when it *is* revealed.

And it is important to observe, that this doctrine of the Trinity *is*

* Hooker on Justification.

not proposed in Scripture as a mystery. It seems then that, as we draw forth many remarkable facts concerning the natural world which do not lie on its surface, so by meditation we detect in Revelation this remarkable principle, which is not openly propounded, *that religious light is intellectual darkness.* As if our gracious Lord had said to us; "Scripture does not *aim* at making mysteries, but they are as shadows brought out by the Sun of Truth. When you knew nothing of revealed light, you knew not revealed darkness. Religious truth requires you should be told *something*, your own imperfect nature prevents your knowing *all*; and to know *something*, and not *all*—*partial knowledge*,—must of course perplex; doctrines imperfectly revealed must be mysterious."

4. Such being the necessary mysteriousness of Scripture doctrine, how can we best turn it to account in the contest we are engaged in with our evil hearts? Now we are given to see how to do this in part, and as far as we see, let us be thankful for the gift. It seems then, that difficulties in revelation are especially given to prove *the reality of our faith.* What shall separate the insincere from the sincere follower of Christ? When the many own Christ with their lips, what shall try and discipline His true servant, and detect the self-deceiver? Difficulties in revelation mainly contribute to this end. They are stumbling-blocks to proud and unhumiliated minds, and were intended to be such. Faith is unassuming, modest thankful, obedient. It receives with reverence and love whatever God gives, when convinced it is His gift. But when men do not feel rightly their need of His redeeming mercy, their lost condition and their inward sin, when, in fact, they do not seek Christ in good earnest, in order to gain something, and do something, but as a matter of curiosity, or speculation, or form, *of course* these difficulties will become great objections in the way of their receiving His word simply. And I say these difficulties were intended to be such by Him who "scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts." St. Peter assures us, that that same corner-stone which is unto them that believe "*precious*," is "unto them which be disobedient, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," "Whereunto also (he adds) *they were appointed.*"* And our Lord's conduct through His ministry is a continued example of this. He spoke in parables,† that they might see and hear, yet not understand,—a righteous detection of insincerity; whereas the same difficulties and obscurities, which offended irreligious men, would but lead the humble and meek to seek for more light, for information as far as it was to be obtained, and for resignation and con-

* 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

† Vide Mark iv. 11—25, &c.

tentedness, where it was not given. When Jesus said, . . . "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. . . . Many of His disciples . . . said, This is a hard saying: who can hear it? . . . and from that time many . . . went back, and walked no more with Him . . . Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Here is the trial of faith, *a difficulty*. Those "that believe not" fall away; the true disciples remain firm, for they feel their *eternal interests* at stake, and ask the very plain and practical, as well as affectionate question, "*To whom shall we go, if we leave Christ?*"*

At another time our Lord says, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, (those who trust reason rather than Scripture and conscience,) and hast revealed them unto babes (those who humbly walk by faith.) Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."†

5. Now what do we gain from thoughts such as these? Our Saviour gives us the conclusion, in the words which follow a passage just read to you. "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given him of my Father." Or, again, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him." Therefore, if we feel the necessity of coming to Christ, yet the difficulty, let us recollect that the gift of coming is in God's hands, and that we must pray Him to give it to us. Christ does not merely tell us, that we cannot come of ourselves, (though this he does tell us,) but He tells us also with whom the power of coming is lodged, with His Father, that we may seek it of Him. It is true, religion has an austere appearance to those who never have tried it; its doctrines full of mystery, its precepts of harshness; so that it is uninviting, offending different men in different ways, but in some way offending all. When then we feel within us the risings of this opposition to Christ, proud aversion to His Gospel, or a low-minded longing after this world, let us pray God to draw us; and though we cannot move a step without Him, at least let us try to move. He looks into our hearts, and sees our strivings even before we strive, and he blesses and strengthens even our feebleness. Let us get rid of curious and presumptuous thoughts by going about our business, whatever it is; and let us mock and baffle the doubts which Satan whispers to us by *acting* against them. No matter whether we believe doubtfully or not, or know clearly or not, so that *we act* upon our belief. The rest will follow in time; part in

* John vi. 53—68.

† Matt. xi. 25, 26.

this world, part in the next. Doubts may pain, but they cannot harm unless we give way to them ; and that we *ought not* to give way our conscience tells us, so that our course is plain. And the more we are in earnest to “work out our salvation,” the less shall we care to know how those things really are, which perplex us. At length when our hearts are in our work, we shall be indisposed to take the trouble of listening to curious truths, (if they are but curious,) though we might have them explained to us. For what says the Holy Scripture ? that of speculations “there is no end,” and they are “a weariness of the flesh ;” but that we must “fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”*

SERMON XVII.

THE SELF-WISE INQUIRER.

1 COR. iii. 18, 19.

“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.”

AMONG the various deceptions against which St. Paul warns us, a principal one is that of a *false wisdom* ; as in the text. The Corinthians prided themselves on their intellectual acuteness and knowledge ; as if any thing could equal the excellence of Christian love. Accordingly St. Paul, writing to them, says, “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world,” (i. e. has the reputation of wisdom in the world,) “let him become a fool, (what the world calls a fool,) that he may (really) be wise.” “For,” he proceeds, (just as real wisdom is foolishness in the eyes of the world, so in turn,) “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

This warning of the Apostle against *our trusting our own wisdom*, may lead us, through God’s blessing, to some profitable reflections to-day.

The world’s wisdom is said to be *foolishness* in God’s sight ; and the

* Eccles. xii. 12, 13.

end of it, error, perplexity, and then ruin. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Here is one especial reason why professed inquirers after Truth do not find it. They seek it in a wrong way, by a vain wisdom, which leads them away from the Truth, however it may seem to promise success.

Let us then inquire, what is this *vain wisdom*, and then we shall the better see how it leads men astray.

Now, when it is said that to trust our own notions is a wrong thing and a vain wisdom, of course this is not meant of all our own notions whatever ; for we must trust our own notions in one shape or other, and some notions which we form are right and true. The question, therefore, is, what is that *evil* trusting to ourselves, that sinful self-confidence, or self-conceit, which is called in the text "the wisdom of the world," and is a chief cause of our going wrong in our religious inquiries ?

These are the notions which we may trust *without* blame ; viz. such as come to us by way of our Conscience, for such come from God. I mean our certainty, that there is a right and a wrong, that some things ought to be done, and other things not done ; that we have duties, the neglect of which brings remorse ; and, further, that God is good, wise, powerful, and righteous, and that we should try to obey Him. All these notions, and a multitude of others like these, come by natural conscience, i. e. they are impressed on all our minds from our earliest years without our trouble. They do not proceed from the mere exertion of our minds, though it is true they are strengthened and formed thereby. They proceed from God, whether within us or without us ; and though we cannot trust them so implicitly as we can trust the Bible, because the truths of the Bible are actually preserved in writing, and so cannot be lost or altered, still, as far as we have reason to think them true, we may rely in them, and make much of them, without incurring the sin of self-confidence. These notions which we obtain without our exertion will never make us proud or conceited, because they are ever attended with a sense of sin and guilt, from the remembrance that we have at times transgressed and injured them. To trust them is not the false wisdom of the world, or foolishness, because they come from the All-wise God. And far from leading a man into error, they will, if obeyed, of a certainty lead him to a firm belief in Scripture ; in which he will find all those vague conjectures and imperfect notions about Truth, which his own heart taught him, abundantly sanctioned, completed, and illustrated.

Such then are the opinions and feelings of which a man is *not* proud. What are those of which he is likely to be proud ? those which he ob-

tains, *not* by nature, but by his own industry, ability, and research ; those which he possesses and others not. Every one is in danger of valuing himself for what he does ; and hence truths (or fancied truths) which a man has obtained for himself after much thought and labour, such he is apt to make much of, and to rely upon ; and this is the source of that vain wisdom of which the Apostle speaks in the text.

Now (I say) this confidence in our own reasoning powers not only leads to pride, but to "*foolishness*" also, and destructive error, because it will oppose itself to Scripture. A man who fancies he can find out truth by himself, disdains revelation. He who thinks he *has* found it out, is *impatient* of revelation. He fears it will interfere with his own imaginary discoveries ; he is unwilling to consult it ; and when it does interfere, then he is angry. We hear much of this proud rejection of the truth in the Epistle from which the text is taken. The Jews felt anger, and the Greeks disdain, at the Christian doctrine. "The Jews required a sign, (according to their preconceived notions concerning the Messiah's coming,) and the Greeks seek after wisdom, (some subtle train of reasoning,) but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."* In another place the Apostle says of the misled Christians of Corinth, "Now ye are full" of your own notions, "now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings *without us* ;"† i. e. you have prided yourself on a wisdom, "*without*," separate from, the truth of Apostolic doctrine. Confidence, then, in our own reasoning powers leads to (what St. Paul calls) foolishness, by causing in our hearts an indifference, or a distaste for Scripture information.

But, besides thus keeping us from the best of guides, it also makes us fools, because it is a confidence in a *bad* guide. Our reasoning powers are very weak in all inquiries into moral and religious truth. Clear-sighted as reason is on other subjects, and trust-worthy as a guide, still in questions connected with our duty to God and man it is very unskilful and equivocating. After all, it barely reaches the same great truths which are authoritatively set forth by Conscience and by Scripture ; and if it be used in religious inquiries without reference to these divinely-sanctioned informants, the probability is, it will miss the Truth altogether. Thus the (so called) wise will be taken in their own craftiness. All of us, doubtless, recollect our Lord's words, which are quite to the purpose : "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the *wise and prudent*, (those who trust in their own intellectual powers,) and hast revealed them unto *babes*."‡ those, i. e. that act by faith, and for conscience-sake.

* 1 Cor. i. 22, 23.

† 1 Cor. iv. 8.

‡ Matt. xi. 25.

The false wisdom, then, of which St. Paul speaks in the text, is a trusting our own powers for arriving at religious truth, instead of taking what is divinely provided for us, whether in nature or revelation. This is the way of the world. In the world, Reason is set against Conscience, and usurps its power; and hence men become "wise in their own conceits," and "leaning to their own understandings," "err from the truth." Let us now review some particulars of this contest between our instinctive sense of right and wrong, and our weak and conceited reason.

It begins within us when childhood and boyhood are past, and the time comes for our entrance into life. Before that time we trusted our divinely-enlightened sense of duty and our right feeling implicitly; and though (alas!) we continually transgressed, and so impaired this inward guide, at least we did not question its authority. *Then* we had that original temper of faith, wrought in us by baptism, the spirit of little children, without which our Lord assures us, none of us, young or old, can enter the kingdom of heaven.*

But when our minds became more manly, and the world opened upon us, then in proportion to the intellectual gifts with which God had honoured us, came the temptation of unbelief and disobedience. Then came reason, led on by passion, to war against our better knowledge. We were driven into the wilderness, after our Lord's manner, by the very Spirit given us, which exposed us to the Devil's devices, before the time or power came of using the gift in God's service. And how many of the most highly-endowed then fall away under trials which the sinless Son of God withstood! He feels for all who are tempted, having Himself suffered temptation; yet what a sight must He see, and by what great exercise of mercy must the Holy Jesus endure, the bold and wicked thoughts which often reign the most triumphantly in the breasts of these (at least for a time) whom He has commissioned by the abundance of their talents to be the especial ministers of His will!

A murmuring against that religious service which is perfect freedom, complaints that Christ's yoke is heavy, a rebellious rising against the authority of Conscience, and a proud arguing against the Truth, or at least an endurance of doubt and scoffing, and a light, unmeaning use of sceptical arguments and assertions; these are the beginnings of apostacy. Then come the affectation of originality, the desire to appear manly and independent, and the fear of the ridicule of our acquaintance, all combining to make us first speak, and then really think evil of the supreme authority of religion. This gradual transgression of the

* Matt. xviii. 3.

first commandment of the Law is generally attended by a transgression of the fifth. In our childhood we loved both religion and our home ; but as we learn to despise the voice of God, so do we first affect, and then feel, an indifference towards the opinions of our superiors and elders. Thus our minds become gradually hardened against the purest pleasures, both divine and human.

As this progress in sin continues, our disobedience becomes its own punishment. In proportion as we lean to our own understanding, we are driven to do so for want of a better guide. Our first true guide, the light of innocence, is gradually withdrawn from us ; and nothing is left for us but to "grope and stumble in the desolate places," by the dim, uncertain light of reason. Thus we are taken in our own craftiness. This is what is sometimes called *judicial blindness* ; such as Pharaoh's, who, from resisting God's will, at length did not know the difference between light and darkness.

How far each individual proceeds in this bad course, depends on a variety of causes, into the consideration of which I need not enter. Some are frightened at themselves, and turn back into the right way before it is too late. Others are checked ; and though they do not seek God with all their heart, yet are preserved from any strong and full manifestation of the evil principles which lurk within them ; and others are kept in a correct outward form of religion by the circumstances in which they are placed. But there are others, and these many in number, perhaps in all ranks of life, who proceed onward in evil ; and I will go on to describe in part their condition—the condition, that is, of those in whom intellectual power is fearfully unfolded amid the neglect of moral truth.

The most common case, of course, is that of those who, with their principles thus unformed, or rather unsettled, become engaged, in the ordinary way, in the business of life. Their first simplicity of character went early. The violence of passion followed, and was indulged ; and it is gone, too, leaving (without their suspecting it) most baneful effects on their mind ; just as some diseases silently change the constitution of the body. Lastly, a vain reason has put into disorder their notions about moral propriety and duty, both as to religion and the conduct of life. It is quite plain that, having nothing of that faith which "overcomes the world," they must be overcome by it. Let it not be supposed I am speaking of some strange case which does not concern us ; for what we know, it concerns some of us most nearly. The issue of our youthful trial in good and evil, probably has had somewhat of a decided character one way or the other ; and we may be quite sure that, if it has issued in evil, we shall not know it. Deadness to the voice of God, hardness of heart, is one of the very symptoms of unbelief. God's

judgments, whether to the world or the individual, are not loudly spoken. The decree goes forth to build or destroy ; Angels hear it ; but we go on in the way of the world as usual, though our souls may have been, at least for a season, abandoned by God. I mean, that it is not at all unlikely that, in the case of some of those who now hear me, a great part of their professed faith is a mere matter of *words*, not *ideas and principles* ; that what opinions they really hold by any exertion of their own minds, have been reached by the mere exercise of their intellect, the random and accidental use of their mere reasoning powers, whether they be strong or not, and are not the result of habitual, firm and progressive obedience to God, not the knowledge which an honest and good heart imparts. Our religious notions may lie on the mere surface of our minds, and have no root within them ; and (I say) from this circumstance, that the indulgence of early passions, though forgotten now, and the misapplication of reason in our youth, have left an indelibly evil character upon our heart, a judicial hardness and blindness. Let us think of this ; it may be the state of those who have had to endure only ordinary temptations, from the growth of that reasoning faculty with which we are all gifted.

But when that gift of reason is something especial,—clear, brilliant, or powerful,—then our danger is increased. The first sin of men of superior understanding is to *value* themselves upon it, and look down upon others. They make intellect the measure of praise and blame ; and instead of considering a common *faith* to be the bond of union between Christian and Christian, they dream of some other fellowship of civilization, refinement, literature, science, or general mental illumination, to unite gifted minds one with another. Having thus cast down moral excellence from its true station, and set up the usurped empire of mere reason, next, they place a value upon all truths exactly in proportion to the possibility of proving them by means of that mere reason. Hence, moral and religious truths are thought little of by them, because they fall under the province of *Conscience* far more than of the intellect. Religion sinks in their estimation almost altogether ; they begin to think all religions alike ; and no wonder, for they are like men who have lost the faculty of discerning colours, and who never, by any exercise of reason, can make out the difference between white and black. The code of morals they acknowledge in a measure, that is, so far as its dicta can be *proved* by reasoning, by an appeal to sight, and to expedience, and without reference to a natural sense of right and wrong as the sanction of them. Thinking much of intellectual advancement, they are much bent on improving the world by

making *all men* intellectual; and they labour to convince themselves, that as men grow in knowledge they will grow in virtue.

As they proceed in their course of judicial blindness, from *undervaluing* they learn to *despise* or to *hate* the authority of Conscience. They treat it as a weakness, to which all men indeed are subject,—they themselves in the number,—especially in seasons of sickness, but of which they have cause to be ashamed. The notions of better men about an over-ruling Providence, and the Divine will, designs, appointments, works, judgments, they treat with scorn, as irrational; especially if (as will often be the case) these notions are conveyed in incorrect language, with some accidental confusion or intellectual weakness of expression.

And all these inducements to live by sight and not by faith are greatly increased, when men are engaged in any pursuit which properly *belongs* to the intellect. Hence sciences conversant with experiments on the material creation, tend to make men forget the existence of spirit and the Lord of spirits.

I will not pursue the course of infidelity into its worst and grossest forms, but it may be instructive before I conclude, to take the case of such a man as I have been describing, when under the influence of some relentings of conscience towards the close of his life.

This is a case of no unfrequent occurrence; that is, it must frequently happen that the most hardened conscience is at times visited by sudden compunctions, though generally they are but momentary. But it sometimes happens, further than this, that a man, from one cause or other, feels he is not in a safe state, and struggles with himself, and the struggle terminates in a manner which affords a fresh illustration of the working of that wisdom of the world, which in God's sight is foolishness.

How shall a sinner, who has formed his character upon unbelief, trusting sight and reason rather than Conscience and Scripture, how shall he begin to repent? What must he do? Is it possible he can overcome himself, and new make his heart in the end of his days? It is possible—not with man, but with God, who gives grace to all who ask for it; but in only one way, *in the way of His commandments* by a slow, tedious, toilsome, self-discipline; slow, tedious, and toilsome, that is, to one who has been long hardening himself in a dislike of it, and indulging himself in the rapid flights and easy victories of his reason. There is but one way to heaven; the narrow way; and he who sets about to seek God, though in old age, must begin at the same door as others. He must retrace his way, and begin again with the very beginning, as if he were a boy. And so proceeding,—labouring, watching,

and praying,—he seems likely, after all, to make but little progress during the brief remnant of his life ; both because the time left to him is short, and because he has to undo while he does a work ;—he has to overcome that resistance from his old stout will and hardened heart, which in youth he did not experience.

Now it is plain how humbling this is to his pride : he wishes to be saved ; but he cannot stoop to be a penitent all his days ; to beg he is ashamed. Therefore he looks about for other means of finding a safe hope. And one way among others by which he deceives himself, is the idea that he may gain religious knowledge merely by his reason.

Thus it happens, that men who have led profligate lives in their youth, or who have passed their days in the pursuit of wealth, or in some other excitement of the world, not unfrequently settle down into *heresies* in their latter years. Before, perhaps, they professed nothing, and suffered themselves to be called Christians and members of the Church ; but at length, roused to inquire after truth, and forgetting that the pure in heart alone can see God, and therefore that they must begin by a *moral* reformation, by self-denial, they inquire merely by the way of reasoning. No wonder they err ; they cannot understand any part of the Church's system whether of doctrine or discipline ; yet they *think* themselves judges ; and they treat the most sacred ordinances and the most solemn doctrines with scorn and irreverence. Thus "the last state of such men is worse than the first." In the words of the text, they ought to have become fools, that they might have been in the end really wise ; but they prefer another way, and are taken in their own craftiness.

May we ever bear in mind that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;" * that obedience to our conscience, in all things, great and small, is the way to know the Truth ; that pride hardens the heart, and sensuality debases it, and that all those who live in pride and sensual indulgence, can no more comprehend the ways of the Holy Spirit, or know the voice of Christ, than the devils who believe with a dead faith and tremble.

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" . . . where there is "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it ; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." †

* Prov. i. 7.

† Rev. xxi. 23. xxii. 14.

S E R M O N X V I I I .

O B E D I E N C E T H E R E M E D Y F O R R E L I G I O U S P E R P L E X I T Y .

P S A L M x x x v i i . 3 4 . †

“Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land.”

THE Psalm from which I have taken my text, is written with a view of encouraging good men who are in perplexity,—and especially perplexity concerning God’s designs, providence, and will. “Fret not thyself;” this is the lesson it inculcates from first to last. This world is in a state of confusion. Unworthy men prosper, and are looked on as the greatest men of the time. Truth and goodness are thrown into the shade; but wait patiently,—peace, be still; in the end, the better side shall triumph,—the meek shall inherit the earth.

Doubtless the Church is in great darkness and perplexity under the Christian dispensation, as well as under the Jewish. Not that Christianity does not explain to us the most important religious question,—which it does to our great comfort; but that, from the nature of the case, imperfect beings, as we are, must always be, on the whole, in a state of darkness. Nay, the very doctrines of the New Testament themselves bring with them their own peculiar difficulties; and, till we learn to quiet our minds, and to school them into submission to God, we shall probably find more perplexity than information even in what St. Paul calls “the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ.”* Revelation was[†] not given us to satisfy doubts, but to make us better men; and it is as we become better men, that it becomes light and peace to our souls; though even to the end of our lives we shall find difficulties both in it and in the world around us.

I will make some remarks to-day on the case of those who, though they are in the whole honest inquirers in religion, yet are more or less in perplexity and anxiety, and so are discouraged.

The use of difficulties to all of us in our trial in this world is obvious. Our faith is variously assailed by doubts and difficulties, in

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

order to prove its sincerity. If we really love God and His Son, we shall go on in spite of opposition, even though, as in the case of the Canaanitish woman, He seem to repel us. If we are not in earnest, difficulty makes us turn back. This is one of the ways in which God separates the corn from the chaff, gradually gathering each, as time goes on, into its own heap, till the end comes, when He "will gather the wheat into His garner, but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable."*

Now I am aware that to some persons it may sound strange to speak of *difficulties* in religion, for they find none at all. But though it is true, that the earlier we begin to seek God in earnest, the less of difficulty and perplexity we are likely to endure, yet this ignorance of religious difficulties in a great many cases, I fear, arises from ignorance of religion itself. When our hearts are not in our work, and we are but carried on with the stream of the world, continuing in the Church because we find ourselves there, observing religious ordinances merely because we are used to them, and professing to be Christians because others do, it is not to be expected that we should know what it is to feel ourselves wrong, and unable to get right,—to feel doubt, anxiety, disappointment, discontent; whereas, when our minds are awakened, and we see that there is a right way and a wrong way, and that we have much to learn, when we try to gain religious knowledge from Scripture, and to apply it to ourselves, then from time we are troubled with doubts and misgivings, and are oppressed with gloom.

To all those who are perplexed in any way soever, who wish for light but cannot find it, one precept must be given,—OBEY. It is obedience which brings a man into the right path; it is obedience keeps him there and strengthens him in it. Under all circumstances, whatever be the cause of his distress,—obey. In the words of the text, "Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee."

Let us apply this exhortation to the case of those who have but lately taken up the subject of religion at all. Every science has its difficulties at first, why then should the science of living well be without them. When the subject of religion is new to us, it is strange. We have heard truths all our lives without feeling them duly; at length, when they affect us, we cannot believe them to be the same we have long known. We are thrown out of our fixed notions of things; an embarrassment ensues; a general painful uncertainty. We say, "is the Bible true? Is it possible?" and are distressed by evil doubts, which we can hardly explain to ourselves, much less to others. No one can

* Luke iii. 17.

help us. And the relative importance of present objects is so altered from what it was, that we can scarcely form any judgment upon them, or when we attempt it, we form a wrong judgment. Our eyes do not accommodate themselves to the various distances of the objects before us, and are dazzled; or like the blind man restored to sight, we "see men as trees, walking."* Moreover, our judgment of persons, as well as of things, is changed; and, if not every where changed, yet at first every where suspected by ourselves. And this general distrust of ourselves is the greater, the longer we have been already living in inattention to sacred subjects, and the more we now are humbled and ashamed of ourselves. And it leads us to take up with the first religious guide who offers himself to us, whatever be his real fitness for the office.

To these agitations of mind about what is truth and what is error, is added an anxiety about ourselves, which, however sincere, is apt to lead us wrong. We do not feel, think, and act as religiously as we could wish; and while we are sorry for it, we are also (perhaps) somewhat *surprised* at it, and impatient at it,—which is natural but unreasonable. Instead of reflecting that we are just setting about our recovery from a most serious disease of long standing, we conceive we ought to be able to trace the course of our recovery by a sensible improvement. This same impatience is seen in persons who are recovering from bodily indisposition. They gain strength slowly, and are better perhaps for some days, and then worse again; and a slight relapse dispirits them. In the same way, when we begin to seek God in earnest, we are apt, not only to be humbled, (which we ought to be,) but, to be discouraged at the slowness with which we are able to amend, in spite of all the assistances of God's grace. Forgetting that our proper title at very best is that of penitent sinners, we seek to rise all at once into the blessedness of the sons of God. This impatience leads us to misuse the purpose of self-examination; which is principally intended to inform us of our sins, whereas we are disappointed if it does not at once tell us of our improvement. Doubtless, in a length of time we shall be conscious of improvement too, but the object of ordinary self-examination is to find out whether we are in earnest, and again, what we have done wrong, in order that we may pray for pardon, and do better. Further, reading in Scripture how exalted the thoughts and spirit of Christians should be, we are apt to forget that a Christian spirit is the growth of time; and that we cannot force it upon our minds, however desirable and necessary it may be to possess it; that by giving utterance to religious sentiments we do not become religious, rather the reverse; whereas, if

* Mark viii. 24.

we strove to obey God's will in all things, we actually should be gradually training our hearts into the fulness of a Christian spirit. But, not understanding this, men are led to speak much and expressly upon sacred subjects, as if it were a duty to do so, and in the hope of its making them better; and they measure their advance in faith and holiness, not by their power of obeying God in practice, mastering their will, and becoming more exact in their daily duties, but by the warmth and energy of their religious feelings. And, when they cannot sustain these to that height which they consider almost the characteristic of a true Christian, then they are discouraged, and tempted to despair. Added to this, sometimes their old sins, reviving from the slumber into which they have been cast for a time, rush over their minds, and seem prepared to take them captive. They cry to God for aid, but He seems not to hear them, and they know not which way to look for safety.

Now such persons must be reminded first of all, of the greatness of the work which they have undertaken, viz. the sanctification of their souls. Those, indeed, who think this an easy task, or (which comes to the same thing) who think that, though hard in itself, it will be easy to them, for God's grace will take all the toil of it from them, such men of course must be disappointed on finding by experience the force of their original evil nature, and the extreme slowness with which even a Christian is able to improve it. And it is to be feared, that this disappointment in some cases issues in a belief, that it is *impossible* to overcome our evil selves; that bad we are, bad we must be; that our innate corruption lies like a load in our hearts, and no more admits of improvement than a stone does of life and thought; and, in consequence, that all we have to do, is to believe in Christ who is to save us, and to dwell on the thoughts of His perfect work for us,—that this is all we can do,—and that it is presumption as well as folly to attempt more.

But, what says the text? "Wait on the Lord and keep his way." And Isaiah? "They that wait upon the Lord shall *renew* their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."* And St. Paul? "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."† The very fruit of Christ's passion was the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was to enable us to do what otherwise we could not do—to *work out our own salvation*.‡—Yet, while we must aim at this, and feel convinced of our ability to do it at length through the gifts bestowed on us, we cannot do it rightly without a deep settled conviction of the exceeding difficulty of the work. That is, not only shall we be tempted to negligence, but to impatience also, and thence into all kinds of unlawful treatments of

* Isa. xl. 31.

† Phil. iv. 13.

‡ Phil. ii. 12.

the soul, if we be possessed by a notion that religious discipline soon becomes easy to the believer, and that the heart is speedily changed. "Christ's yoke is easy :"* true, to those who are accustomed to it, not to the unbroken neck. "Wisdom is very unpleasant to the unlearned, (says the son of Sirach,) he that is without understanding will not remain with her." "At the first she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul and try him by her laws. Then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and show him her secrets."†

Let, then, every beginner make up his mind to suffer disquiet and perplexity. He cannot complain that it should be so ; and though he should be deeply ashamed of himself that it is so, (for had he followed God from a child, his condition would have been far different, though, then, perhaps, not without some perplexities,) still he has no cause to be surprised or discouraged. The more he makes up his mind manfully to bear doubt, struggle against it, and meekly to do God's will all through it, the sooner this unsettled state of mind will cease, and order will rise out of confusion. "Wait on the Lord," this is the rule ; "keep His way," this is the manner of waiting. Go about your duty ; mind little things as well as great. Do not pause, and say, "I am as I was ; day after day passes, and still no light ;" go on. It is very painful to be haunted by wandering doubts, to have thoughts shoot across the mind about the reality of religion altogether, or of this or that particular doctrine of it, or about the correctness of one's own faith, and the safety of one's own state. But it must be right to serve God ; we have a voice within us answering to the injunction in the text, of waiting on Him, and keeping His way. David confesses it. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye my face ; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."‡ And surely such obedient waiting upon Him will obtain his blessing. "*Blessed* are they that keep His commandments." And besides this express promise, even if we had to seek for a way to understand His perfect will, could we conceive one of greater promise than that of beginning with little things, and so gradually making progress? In all other things is not this the way to perfection? Does not a child learn to walk short distances at first? Who would attempt to bear great weights before he had succeeded with the lesser? It is from God's great goodness that our daily constant duty is placed in the performance of small and comparatively easy services. To be dutiful and obedient in ordinary matters, to speak the truth, to be honest, to be sober, to

* Matt. xi. 30.

† Eccles. vi. 20. iv. 17, 18.

‡ Psalm xxvii. 8.

keep from sinful words and thoughts, to be kind and forgiving,—and all this for our Saviour's sake,—let us attempt *these* duties first. *They* even will be difficult,—the least of them; still they are much easier than the solution of the doubts which harass us, and they will by degrees, give us a practical knowledge of the Truth.

To take one instance, out of many which might be given: suppose we have any perplexing indescribable doubts about the Divine power of our Blessed Lord, or concerning the doctrine of the Trinity; well, let us leave the subject, and turn to God's will. If we do this in faith and humility, we shall in time find that, while we have been obeying our Saviour's precepts, and imitating His conduct in the Gospels, our difficulties have been removed, though it may take time to remove them; and though we are not, during the time, sensible of what is going on. There may, indeed, be cases in which they are never removed entirely, —and in which doubtless some great and good object is secured by the trial; but we may fairly and safely look out for a more comfortable issue. And so as regards all our difficulties. "Wait on the Lord, and keep His way." His word is sure; we may safely trust it. We shall gain light as to general doctrines, by embodying them in those particular instances in which they become ordinary duties.

But it too often happens, that from one cause or other men do not pursue this simple method of gradually extricating themselves from error,—They seek some new path which promises to be shorter and easier than the lowly and the circuitous way of obedience. They wish to arrive at the heights of Mount Zion without winding round its base; and at first (it must be confessed) they seem to make greater progress than those who are content to wait, and work righteousness. Impatient of "sitting in darkness, and having no light," and of completing the prophet's picture of a saint in trouble, by "fearing the Lord, and obeying the voice of His servant,"* they expect to gain speedy peace and holiness by means of new teachers, and by a new doctrine.

Many are misled by confidence in themselves. They look back at the first seasons of their repentance and conversion, as if the time of their greatest knowledge; and instead of considering that their earliest religious notions were probably the most confused and mixed with error, and therefore endeavouring to separate the good from the bad, they consecrate all they then felt as a standard of doctrine to which they are bound to appeal; and as to the opinions of others, they think little of it, for religion being a new subject to themselves, they are easily led to think it must be

* Isaiah l. 10.

a new and untried subject to others also, especially, since the best men are often the least willing to converse, except in private, on religious subjects, and still more averse to speak of them to those who they think will not value them rightly.

But, leaving the mention of those who err from self-confidence, I would rather lament over such as are led away from the path of plain simple obedience by a compliance with the views and wishes of those around them. Such persons there are all through the Church, and ever have been. Such perhaps have been many Christians in the communion of the Church of Rome; who, feeling deeply the necessity of a religious life, yet strive by means different from those which God has blessed, to gain His favour. They begin religion at the very end of it, and make those observances and rules the chief means of pleasing Him, which in fact should be but the spontaneous acts of the formed Christian temper. And others among ourselves are bound by a similar yoke of bondage, though it be more speciously disguised, when they subject their minds to certain unscriptural rules, and fancy they must separate in some self-devised way from the world, and that they must speak and act according to some arbitrary and novel form of doctrine, which they try to set before themselves, instead of endeavouring to imbue their hearts with that free, unconstrained spirit of devotion, which lowly obedience in ordinary matters would imperceptibly form within them. How many are there, more or less such, who love the Truth, and would fain do God's will, who yet are led aside, and walk in bondage, while they are promised superior light and freedom! They desire to be living members of the Church, and they anxiously seek out whatever they can admire in the true sons of the Church; but they feel forced to measure every thing by a certain superstitious standard which they revere,—they are frightened at shadows,—and thus they are, from time to time, embarrassed and perplexed, whenever, that is, they cannot reconcile the conduct and lives of those who are really, and whom they wish to believe eminent Christians, with that false religious system which they have adopted.

Before concluding, I must notice one other state of mind in which the precept of "waiting on God and keeping His way," will avail, above all others, to lead right a doubting and perplexed mind.

It sometimes happens, from ill health or other cause, that persons fall into religious despondency. They fancy that they have so abused God's mercy that there is no hope for them; that once they knew the Truth, but that now it is withdrawn from them; that they have had warnings which they have neglected, and now they are left by the Holy Spirit, and given over to Satan. Then, they recollect divers passages of Scripture, which speak of the peril of falling away, and they apply these to

their own case Now I speak of such instances, only so far as they can be called ailments of the mind,—for often they must be treated as ailments of the body. As far as they are mental, let us observe how it will conduce to restore the quiet of the mind, to attend to the humble ordinary duties of our station, that walking in God's way, of which the text speaks. Sometimes, indeed, persons thus afflicted, increase their disorder by attempting to console themselves by those elevated Christian doctrines which St. Paul enlarges on; and others encourage them in it. But St. Paul's doctrine is not intended for weak and unstable minds.* He says himself: "We speak wisdom among them that *are perfect*;"† not to those who are (what he calls) "babes in Christ."‡ In proportion as we gain strength, we shall be able to understand and profit by the full promises of the Christian covenant; but those who are confused, agitated, restless in their minds, who busy themselves with many thoughts, and are overwhelmed with conflicting feelings, such persons are, in general, made more restless and more unhappy, (as the experience of sick beds may show us,) by holding out to them doctrines and assurances which they cannot rightly apprehend. Now, not to speak of that peculiar blessing which is promised to obedience to God's will, let us observe how well it is calculated, by its natural effect, to soothe and calm the mind. When we set about to obey God, in the ordinary business of daily life, we are at once interested by realities which withdraw our minds from vague fears and uncertain indefinite surmises about the future. Without laying aside the thoughts of Christ, (the contrary,) still we learn to view Him in His tranquil providence, before we set about contemplating His greater works, and we are saved from taking an unchristian thought to morrow, while we are busied in present services. Thus our Saviour gradually discloses Himself to the troubled mind; not as He is in heaven, as when He struck down Saul to the ground, but as He was in the days of His flesh, eating and conversing among His brethren, and bidding us, in imitation of Him, think no duty beneath the notice of those who sincerely wish to please God.

Such afflicted inquirers, then, after truth, must be exhorted to keep a guard upon their feelings, and to control their hearts. They say they are terrified lest they should be past hope; and they will not be persuaded that God is all-merciful, in spite of all the Scriptures say to that effect. Well, then, I would take them on their own ground. Supposing their state to be as wretched as is conceivable, can they deny it is their duty *now* to serve God? Can they do better than try to serve Him? Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."‡ They say

* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

† 1 Cor. ii. 6. iii. 1.

‡ Job xiii. 15.

they do not *wish* to serve God,—that they want a heart to serve Him. Let us grant (if they will have it so,) that they are most obdurate; still they are alive,—they must be doing something, and can they do ought better than try to quiet themselves, and be resigned, and to do right rather than wrong, even though they are persuaded that it does not come from their heart, and is not acceptable to God? They say they dare not ask for God's grace to assist them. This is doubtless a miserable state; still, since they must act in some way, though they cannot do what is really good without His grace, yet, at least, let them do what seems like truth and goodness. Nay, though it is shocking to set before their minds such a prospect, yet even were they already in the place of punishment, will they not confess, it would be the best thing they could do, to commit then as little sin as possible? Much more then *now*, when even if they have no hope, their heart at least is not so entirely hardened as it will be then.

It must not be for an instant supposed I am admitting the possibility of a person being rejected by God, who has any such right feelings in his mind. The anxiety of the sufferers I have been describing, shows they are still under the influence of Divine grace, though they will not allow it; but I say this, to give another instance in which a determination to obey God's will strictly in ordinary matters tends, through His blessing, to calm and comfort the mind, and to bring it out of perplexity into the clear day.

And so in various other cases which might be recounted. Whatever our difficulty be, this is plain. "Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee." Or in our Saviour's words; "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." Whosoever shall do and teach these least commandments, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."*

* John xiv. 21. Matt. v. 19, xiii. 12.

SERMON XIX.

TIMES OF PRIVATE PRAYER.

MATTHEW vi. 6.

“Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

HERE is our Saviour's own sanction and blessing vouchsafed to private prayer, in simple, clear, and most gracious words. The Pharisees were in the practice, when they prayed by themselves, of praying in *public*, in the corners of the streets; a strange inconsistency according to our notions, since in our language prayer by oneself is ever called *private* prayer. Public private prayer, this was their self-contradictory practice. Warning, then, His disciples against the particular form of hypocrisy in which the self-conceit of human nature at that day showed itself, our Lord promises in the text His Father's blessing on such humble supplications as were really addressed to Him, and not made to gain the praise of men. Those who seek the unseen God, (He seems to say,) seek Him in their hearts and hidden thoughts, not in loud words, as if He were far off from them. Such men would retire from the world into places where no human eye saw them, there to meet Him humbly and in faith, who is “about their path, and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways.” And He, the searcher of hearts, would reward them openly. Prayers uttered in secret, according to God's will, are treasured up in God's Book of Life. They seem, perhaps, to have sought an answer here, and to have failed of their object. Their memory perishes even in the mind of the petitioner, and the world never knew them. But God is ever mindful, and in the last day, when the books are opened, they shall be disclosed and rewarded before the whole world.

Such is Christ's gracious promise in the text, acknowledging and blessing, according to His own condescension, those devotional exercises which were a duty even before Scripture enjoined them; and

changing into a privilege that work of faith, which, though bidden by conscience, and authorized by reason, yet before He revealed His mercy, is laden, in every man's case who attempts it, with guilt, remorse and fear. It is the Christian's unspeakable privilege, and his alone, that he has at all times free access to the throne of grace boldly through the mediation of his Saviour.

But, in what I shall now say concerning prayer, I shall not consider it as a privilege, but as a duty; for till we have some experience of the duties of religion, we are incapable of entering duly into the privileges; and it is too much the fashion of the day to view prayer chiefly as a mere privilege, such a privilege as it is inconsiderate indeed to neglect, but only inconsiderate, not sinful; and optional to use.

Now, we know well enough that we are bound to be in one sense in prayer and meditation all the day long. The question then arises, are we to pray in any other way? Is it enough to keep our minds fixed upon God through the day and to commune with Him in our hearts, or is it necessary, over and above this habitual faith, to set apart particular times for the more systematic and earnest exercise of it? Need we pray at certain times of the day in a set manner? *Public* worship indeed, from its very nature, requires *places, times, and even set forms*. But *private* prayer does not necessarily require set *times*, because we have no one to consult but ourselves, and we are always with ourselves; nor *forms*, for there is no one else whose thoughts are to keep pace with ours. Still, though set times and forms of prayer are not absolutely *necessary* in private prayer, yet they are highly expedient; or rather, times are actually commanded us by our Lord in the text, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

In these words certain *time* for private prayer, over and above the secret thought of God which must ever be alive in us, are clearly enjoined: and the practice of good men in Scripture gives us an example in confirmation of the command. Even our Saviour had His peculiar seasons of communing with God. His thoughts indeed were one continued sacred service offered up to His Father; nevertheless we read of His going up "into a mountain apart to pray," and again, of His "continuing all night in prayer to God."* Doubtless, you will recollect that solitary prayer of His, before His passion, thrice repeated, "that the cup might pass from Him." St. Peter too, as in the narrative of the conversion of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, in the tenth

* Matt. xiv. 23. Luke vi. 12.

chapter of the Acts, went up upon the house-top to [pray about the sixth hour; then God visited him. And Nathaniel seems to have been in prayer under the fig-tree, at the time our Saviour saw him, and Philip called him.* I might multiply instances from Scripture of such Israelites without guile; which are of course applicable to us, because, though they were under a divine government in many respects different from the Christian, yet *personal* religion is the same at all times; "the just" in every dispensation "shall live by faith," and whatever reasons there were then for faith to display and maintain itself by stated prayer, remain substantially the same now. Let two passages suffice. The Psalmist says, "*Seven times a day do I praise Thee, because of thy righteous judgments.*"† And Daniel's practice is told us on a memorable occasion: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, (the impious decree, forbidding prayer to any but king Darius for thirty days,) he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees *three times* a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime.*"‡

It is plain, then, besides the devotional temper in which [we should pass the day, more solemn and direct acts of worship, nay, *regular and periodical*, are required of us by the precept of Christ, and His own example, and that of His Apostles and Prophets under both covenants.

Now it is necessary to insist upon this duty of observing private prayer at stated times, because amid the cares and hurry of life men are very apt to neglect it: and it is a much more important duty than it is generally considered, even by those who perform it.

The following are two chief reasons for its importance.

1. It brings religious subjects before the mind in regular course. Prayer *through* the day, is indeed the characteristic of a Christian spirit, but we may be sure that, in most cases, those who do not pray at stated times in a more solemn and direct manner, will never pray well at other times. We know in the common engagements of life, the importance of collecting and arranging our thoughts calmly and accurately before proceeding to any important business, in order to the right performance of it; and so in that one really needful occupation, the care of our eternal interests, if we would have our minds composed, our desires subdued, and our tempers heavenly through the day, we must, before commencing the day's employment, stand still awhile to look into ourselves, and commune with our hearts, by way of preparing ourselves for the trials and duties on which we are entering. A like reason may be assigned

* John i. 48.

† Psalm cxix. 164.

‡ Dan. vi. 10.

for evening prayer, viz. as affording us a time of looking back on the past day, and summing up (as it were) that account, which, if *we* do not reckon, at least God has reckoned, and written down in that book which will be produced at the judgment; a time of confessing sin, and of praying for forgiveness, of giving thanks for what we have done well, and for mercies received, of making good resolutions in reliance on the help of God, and of sealing up and setting sure the day past, at least as a stepping-stone of good for the morrow. The precise times indeed of private prayer are no where commanded us in Scripture; the most obvious are those I have mentioned, morning and evening. In the texts just now read to you, you heard of praying three times a day, or seven times. All this depends of course on the opportunities of each individual. Some men have not leisure for this; but for morning and evening prayer all men can and should *make* leisure.

Stated times of private prayer, then, are useful as impulses (so to say) to the continuous devotion of the day. They instruct us and engage us in what is ever our duty. It is commonly said, that what is every one's business is practically no one's; this applies here. I repeat it, if we leave religion as a subject of thought for all hours of the day equally, it will be thought of in none. In all things it is by small beginnings and appointed channels, that an advance is made to extensive works. Stated times of prayer put us in that posture, (as I may call it,) in which we ought ever to be; they urge us forward in a heavenly direction, and then the stream carries us on. For the same reason it is expedient, if possible, to be solemn in the forms of our private worship, in order to impress our minds. Our Saviour *kneeled* down, fell on His face, and prayed,*—so did His Apostles;† and so did the Saints of the Old Testament. Hence many persons are accustomed (such as have the opportunity) to set apart a particular place for their private devotions; still for the same reason, to compose their mind,—as Christ tells us in the text, to enter into our closet.

2. I now come to the second reason for stated private prayer. Besides its tending to produce in us lasting religious impressions, which I have already enlarged upon, it is also a more direct means of gaining from God an answer to our requests. He has so sanctioned it in the text:—"Shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which seeth in secret, and He shall reward thee openly." We do not know *how* it is that prayer receives an answer from God at all. It is strange, indeed, that weak man should have strength to move God; but it is our privilege to know that we *can* do so. The whole system of this world is a history

* Matt. xxvi. 39. Luke xxii. 41.

† Acts xx. 36. xxi. 5. Eph. iii. 14.

of man's interfering with Divine decrees; and if we have the melancholy power of baffling His good-will, to our own ruin, (an awful, an incomprehensible truth !) if when He designs our eternal salvation, we can yet annul our heavenly election, and accomplish our eternal destruction, much more have we the power to move Him (blessed be His name !) when He, the Searcher of hearts, discerns in us the mind of that Holy Spirit, which "maketh intercession for the saints according to His will." And, as He has thus promised an answer to our poor prayers, so it is not more strange that prayers offered up at particular times, and in a particular way, should have especially prevailing power with Him. And the reason of it may be as follows. It is Faith that is the appointed means of gaining all blessing from God. "All things are possible to him that believeth,"* Now, at stated times, when we gather up our thoughts to pray, and draw out our petitions in an orderly and clear manner, the act of faith is likely to be stronger and more earnest; then we realize more perfectly the presence of that God whom we do not see, and Him on whom once all our sins were laid, who bore the weight of our infirmities and sicknesses once for all, that in all our troubles we might seek Him, and find grace in time of need. Then this world is more out of sight, and we more simply appropriate those blessings, which we have but to claim humbly and they are really ours.

Stated times of prayer, then, are necessary, first, as a means of making the mind sober, and the general temper more religious; secondly, as a means of exercising earnest faith, and therefore of receiving a more certain blessing in answer, than we should otherwise obtain.

Other reasons, doubtless, may be given; but these are enough, not only as containing subject for thought which may be useful to us, but besides are serving to show how wise and merciful those Divine provisions really are, which our vain minds are so apt to question. All God's commands, indeed, ought to be received at once upon faith, though we saw no reason for them. It is no excuse for a man's disobeying them even if he thinks he sees reasons against them; for God knows better than we do. But in great condescension He has allowed us to see here and there His reasons for what He does and enjoins; and we should treasure up these occasional notices as memorials against the time of temptation, that when doubt and unbelief assail us, and we are perplexed at His revealed word, we may call to mind those former instances in our own experience, where, what at first seemed strange and

* Mark ix. 23.

hard, on closer consideration was found to have a wise end. Now the duty of observing stated times of private prayer is one of those concerning which we are apt to entertain the unbelieving thoughts I have been describing.

It seems to us to be a form, or at least a light matter, to observe or omit; whereas in truth, such creatures as we, there is the most close and remarkable connexion between small observances and the permanence of our chief habits and practices. It is easy to see why it is irksome; because it presses upon us and is inconvenient. It is a duty which claims our attention continually, and its irksomeness leads our hearts to rebel; and then we proceed to search for reasons to justify our own dislike of it. Nothing is more difficult than to be disciplined and regular in our religion. It is very easy to be religious by fits and starts, and to keep up our feelings by artificial stimulants; but regularity seems to trammel us, and we become impatient. This is especially the case with those to whom the world is as yet new, and who can do as they please. Religion is the chief subject which meets them, which enjoins regularity; and they bear it only so far as they can make it look like things of this world, curious or changeable or exciting. Satan knows his advantage here. He perceives well enough that stated private prayer is the very emblem and safeguard of true devotion to God, as impressing on us and keeping up in us a rule of conduct. He who gives up regularity in prayer has lost a principal means of reminding himself that spiritual life is obedience to a Lawgiver, not a mere feeling or a taste. Hence it is that so many persons, especially in the polished ranks of society, who are out of the way of temptation to gross vice, fall away into a mere luxurious self-indulgent devotion, which they take for religion; they reject every thing which implies self-denial, and regular prayer especially. Hence it is that others run into all kinds of enthusiastic fancies; because, by giving up set private prayer in written forms, they have lost the chief rule of their hearts. Accordingly, you will hear them exclaim against regular prayer, (which is the very medicine suited to their disease,) as a formal service, and maintain that times and places and fixed words are beneath the attention of a spiritual Christian. And others, who are exposed to the seductions of sin, altogether fall away from the same omission. Be sure, my brethren, whoever, of you is persuaded to disuse his morning and evening prayers, is giving up the armour which is to secure him against the wiles of the Devil. If you have left off the observance of them, you may fall any day;—and you will fall without notice. For a time you will go on, seeming to yourselves to be the same as before; but the Israelites might as well hope to lay in a stock of manna as you of grace.

You pray God for your daily bread, your bread day by day ; and if you have not prayed for it this morning, it will profit you little that you prayed for it yesterday. You did then pray and you obtained,—but not a supply for two days. When you have given over the practice of stated prayer, you gradually become weaker without knowing it. Samson did not know he had lost his strength till the Philistines came upon him ; you will think yourselves the men you used to be, till suddenly your adversary will come furiously upon you, and you will as suddenly fall. You will be able to make little or no resistance. This is the path which leads to death. Men first leave off private prayer ; then they neglect the due observance of the Lord's day (which is a stated service of the same kind ;) then they gradually let slip from their minds the very idea of obedience to a fixed eternal law ; then they actually allow themselves in things which their conscience condemns ; then they lose the direction of their conscience, which being ill used, at length refuses to direct them. And thus, being left by their true inward guide, they are obliged to take another guide, their reason, which by itself knows little or nothing about religion ; then this their blind reason forms a system of right or wrong for them, as well as it can, flattering to their own desires, and presumptuous where it is not actually corrupt. No wonder such a scheme contradicts Scripture, which it is soon found to do ; not that they are certain to perceive this themselves ; they often do not know it, and think themselves still believers in the Gospel, while they maintain doctrines which the Gospel condemns. But sometimes they perceive that their system is contrary to Scripture ; and then, instead of giving it up, they give up Scripture, and profess themselves unbelievers. Such is the course of disobedience, beginning in (apparently) slight omissions, and ending in open unbelief ; and all men who walk in the broad way which leads to destruction are but in different stages of it, one more advanced than another, but all in one way. And I have spoken of it here, in order to remind you how intimately it is connected with the neglect of set private prayer ; whereas, he who is strict in the observance of morning and evening devotion, praying with his heart as well as his lips, can hardly go astray, for every morning and evening brings him a monitor to draw him back and restore him.

Beware then of the subtilty of your Enemy, who would fain rob you of your defence. Do not yield to his bad reasonings. Be on your guard especially, when you get into novel situations or circumstances, which interest and delight you ; lest they throw you out of your regularity in prayer. Any thing new or unexpected is dangerous to you. Going much into mixed society, and seeing many strange persons,

taking share in any pleasant amusements, reading interesting books, entering into any new line of life, forming some new acquaintance, the prospect of any worldly advantage, travelling, all these things and such like, innocent as they are in themselves, and capable of a religious use, become means of temptation if we are not on our guard. See that you are not *unsettled* by them, this is the danger; fear becoming *unsettled*. Consider that stability of mind is the chief of virtues, for it is Faith. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee;"* this is the promise. But "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."† Nor to the wicked only, in our common sense of the word, "wicked," but to none is there rest, who in any way leave their God, and rove after the goods of this world. Do not indulge visions of earthly good, fix your hearts on higher things, let your morning and evening thoughts be the points of rest for your mind's eye, and let those thoughts be upon the narrow way, and the blessedness of heaven, and the glory and power of Christ your Saviour. Thus will you be kept from unseemly risings and fallings, and steadied in an equable way. Men in general will know nothing of this; they witness not your private prayers, and they will confuse you with the multitude they fall in with. But your friends and acquaintance will gain a light and a comfort from your example; they will see your good works, and be led to trace them to their true secret source, the influences of the Holy Ghost sought and obtained by prayer. Thus they will glorify your heavenly Father, and in imitation of you will seek Him; and He who seeth in secret, shall at length reward you openly.

* Isaiah xxvi. 3.

† Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.

SERMON XX.

FORMS OF PRIVATE PRAYER.

LUKE xi. 1.

“Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

THESE words express the natural feelings of the awakened mind, perceiving its great need of God's help, yet not understanding well what its particular wants are, or how they are to be relieved. The disciples of John the Baptist, and the disciples of Christ, waited on their respective Masters for instruction *how to pray*. It was in vain that the duty of repentance was preached to the one, and of faith to the other; in vain that God's mercies and His judgments were set before them, and their own duties; they seem to have all that was necessary for making prayers for themselves, yet they could not; their hearts were full, but they remained dumb; they could offer no petition except *to be taught* to pray; they knew the Truth, but they could not use it. So different a thing is it to be instructed in religion, and to have so mastered it in practice, that it is altogether our own.

Their need has been the need of Christians ever since. All of us in childhood, and most men ever after, require direction how to pray; and hence the use of *Forms of prayer*, which have always obtained in the Church. John taught his disciples; Christ gave the Apostles the prayer which is distinguished by the name of the *Lord's Prayer*; and after He had ascended on high, the Holy Spirit has given us excellent services of devotion by the mouth of those blessed saints, whom from time to time He has raised up to be overseers in the Church. In the words of St. Paul, “We know not what we should pray for as we ought;”^{*} but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities;” and that, not only by guiding our thoughts, but by directing our words.

This, I say, is the origin of *Forms of prayer*, of which I mean to speak to-day; viz. these two undeniable truths, first, that all men have the same spiritual wants,—and, secondly, that they cannot of themselves express them.

Now it has so happened that in these latter times self-wise reasoners

^{*} Rom. viii. 23.

have arisen who have questioned the use of Forms of prayer, and have thought it better to pray out of their own thoughts at random, using words which come into their minds at the time they pray. It may be right then, that we should have some reasons at hand for our use of those Forms, which we have adopted because they were handed down to us. Not, as if it were not quite a *sufficient* reason for using them, that we have received them, and, (in St. Paul's words,) that "neither we nor the Churches of God have known any other custom,"* and that the best of Christians have ever used them; for this *is* an abundantly satisfactory reason;—nor again, as if we could hope by reasons ever so good, to persuade those who inquire of us, which most likely we shall not be able to do; for a man is far gone in extravagance who deliberately denies the use of Forms, and is likely to find our reasons as difficult to receive as the practice we are defending;—so that we can only say of such men, as St. Paul speaks in the epistle just referred to, "if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant," there is no help for it. But it may be useful to show you *how* reasonable the practice is, in order that you yourselves may turn it to better account; for when we know why we do a thing, we are likely (the same circumstances being supposed) to do it more comfortably than when we obey ignorantly.

Now, I suppose no one is in any difficulty about the use of Forms of prayer in *public* worship; for common sense almost will tell us, that when many are to pray together *as one* man, if their thoughts are to go together, they *must* agree beforehand what is to be the subject of their prayers, nay, what the *words* of their prayers, if there is to be any certainty, composure, ease, and regularity in their united devotions. To be present at extempore prayer, is to *hear prayers*. Nay, it might happen, or rather often would happen, that we did not understand what was said; and then the person praying is scarcely praying "in a tongue understood of the people," (as our Article expresses it;) he is rather interceding *for* the people, than praying *with* them, and leading their worship. In the case, then, of *public* prayer the need of forms is evident; but it is not at first sight *so* obvious that in *private* prayer also we need use written Forms, instead of praying *extempore* (as it is called;) so I proceed to show the use of them.

1. Let us bear in mind the precept of the wise man. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."† Prayers framed at the moment are likely to become *irreverent*. Let us consider for a few moments before we pray,

* Cor. xi. 16.

† Eccles. v. 2.

into whose presence we are entering,—the presence of God. What need have we of humble, sober, and subdued thoughts ! as becomes *creatures*, sustained hourly by his bounty ;—as becomes *lost sinners* who have no right to speak at all, but must submit in silence to Him who is holy ;—and still more as grateful *servants of Him* who bought us from ruin at the price of His own blood ; meekly sitting at His feet like Mary to learn and to do His will, and like the penitent at the great man's feast, quietly adoring Him, and doing Him service without disturbance, washing His feet (as it were) with our tears, and anointing them with precious ointment, as having sinned much and needing a large forgiveness. Therefore to avoid the irreverence of many or unfit words and rude half-religious thoughts, it is necessary to pray from book or memory, and not at random.

It may be objected, that this reason for using Forms proves too much ; viz. that it would be wrong ever to do without them ; which is an over-rigorous bond upon Christian liberty. But I reply, that reverence in our prayers will be sufficiently secured, if at our stated seasons for prayer we make use of Forms. For thus a tone and character will be imparted to our devotion throughout the day ; nay even the very petitions and ejaculations will be supplied, which we need. And much more will our souls be influenced by the power of them, at the very time we are using them ; so that, should the occasion require, we shall find ourselves able to go forward naturally and soberly into such additional supplications, as are of too particular or private a nature, to admit of being written down in set words.

2. In the next place, forms of prayer are necessary to guard us against the irreverence of *wandering* thoughts. If we pray without set words (read or remembered,) our minds will stray from the subject ; other thoughts will cross us, and we shall pursue them ; we shall lose sight of His presence whom we are addressing. This wandering of mind is in good measure prevented, under God's blessing, by Forms of prayer. Thus a chief use of them is that of *fixing the attention*.

3. Next, they are useful in securing us from the irreverence of *excited thoughts*. And here there is room for saying much ; for it so happens Forms of prayer are censured for the very circumstance about them which is their excellence. They are accused of impeding the current of devotion, when, in fact, that (so called) current is in itself faulty, and ought to be checked. And those persons (as might be expected) are most eager in their opposition to them, who require more than others the restraint of them. They sometimes throw their objection into the following form, which it may be worth while to consider. They say, "If a man is in earnest, he will soon find words ; there is

no need of a set Form of prayer. And if he is not in earnest, a Form can do him no good." Now that a man who is in earnest will soon find words, is true or not true, according to what is meant by being in earnest. It is true that in certain times a strong emotion, grief or joy, remorse or fear, our religious feelings outrun and leave behind them any Form of words. In such cases not only is there no *need* of Forms of prayer, but it is perhaps impossible to write *Forms* of prayer for Christians agitated by such feelings. For each man feels in his own way,—perhaps no two men exactly alike ;—and we can no more write down *how* men ought to pray at such times, than we can give rules how they should weep or be merry. The better men they are, of course the better they will pray in such a trying time ; but you cannot make them better ; they must be left to themselves. And, though good men have before now set down in writing Forms of prayer for persons so circumstanced, these were doubtless meant rather as patterns and helps, or as admonitions and (if so be) quietings of the agitated mind, than as prayers which it was expected would be used literally and entirely in their detail. As a general rule, Forms of prayer should not be written in strong and impassioned language ; but should be calm, composed, and short. Our Saviour's own prayer is our model in this respect. How few are its petitions ! how soberly expressed ! how reverently ! and at the same time how deep are they, and how comprehensive !—I readily grant, then, that there *are* times when the heart outruns any written words ; as the jailor cried out, " What shall I do to be saved ? " Nay, rather I would maintain that set words should not attempt to imitate the impetuous workings to which all minds are subject at times in this world of change, (and therefore religious minds in the number,) lest one should seem to encourage them.

Still the question is not at all settled ; granting there *are* times when a thankful or a wounded heart bursts through all forms of prayer, yet these are not *frequent*. To be excited is not the *ordinary* state of the mind, but the extraordinary, the now and then state. Nay, more than this, it *ought not* to be the common state of the mind ; and if we are encouraging within us this excitement, this unceasing rush and alternation of feelings, and think that this, and this only, is being in earnest in religion, we are harming our minds, and (in one sense) I may even say, grieving the peaceful Spirit of God, which would silently and tranquilly work His Divine work in our hearts. This, then, is an especial *use* of Forms of prayer, *when* we are in earnest, as we ought always to be, viz. to keep us from irreverent earnestness, to still emotion, to calm us, to remind us what and where we are, to lead us to a purer and serener

temper, and to that deep unruffled love of God and man, which is really the fulfilling of the law, and the perfection of human nature.

Then, again as to the usefulness of Forms if we are *not* in earnest, this also is true or not, as we may take it. For there are degrees of earnestness. Let us recollect, the power of praying, being a habit, must be acquired, like all other habits, by practice. In order at length to pray well, we must begin by praying ill, since ill is all we can do. Is not this plain? Who, in the case of any other work, would wait till he could do it perfectly, before he tried it? The idea is absurd. Yet those who object to Forms of prayer on the ground just mentioned, fall into this strange error. If, indeed, we could pray and praise God like the Angels, we might have no need of Forms of prayer; but Forms are to teach those who pray poorly to pray better. They are helps to our devotion, as teaching us what to pray for, and how, as St. John and our Lord taught their disciples? and, doubtless, even the *best* of us prays *but* poorly, and *needs* the help of them. However, the persons I speak of, think that prayer is nothing else but the bursting forth of strong feeling, not the action of a habit, but an emotion, and, therefore, *of course* to such men the very notion of *learning* to pray seems absurd. But this indulgence of emotion is in truth founded on a mistake, as I have already said.

4. Further, forms are useful to *help our memory* and to set before us at once, completely, and in order, what we have to pray for. It does not follow, when the heart is really full of the thought of God, and alive to the reality of things unseen, that then it is easiest to pray. Rather, the deeper insight we have into His Majesty and our innumerable wants, the less we shall be able to draw out our thoughts into words. The publican could only say, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" this was enough for his *acceptance*; but to offer such a scanty service was not to exercise the *gift* of prayer, the privilege of a ransomed and exalted Son of God. He whom Christ has illuminated with His grace, is heir of all things. He has an interest in the world's multitude of matters. He has a boundless sphere of duties within and without him. He has a glorious prospect before him. The saints shall hereafter judge the world; and shall they *not here* take cognizance of its doings? are they not in one sense counsellors and confidential servants of their Lord, intercessors at the throne of grace, the secret agents by and for whom He guides His high providence, and carries on the nations to their doom? And in their own persons is forgiveness merely and acceptance (extreme blessings as these are) the scope of their desires? else might they be content with the publican's prayer. Are they not rather bidden to go on to perfection, to use the Spirit given them, to enlarge

and purify their own hearts, and to draw out the nature of man into the fulness of its capabilities after the image of the Son of God? And for the thought of all these objects at once who is sufficient? Whose mind is not overpowered by the view of its own immense privilege, so as eagerly to seek for words of prayer and intercession carefully composed according to the number and the nature of the various petitions it has to offer? so that he who prays without plan, is in fact losing a great part of the privilege, with which his Baptism has gifted him.

5. And further, the use of a Form as a help to the memory is still more obvious, when we take into account the engagements of this world with which most men are surrounded. The cares and businesses of life press upon us with a reality which we cannot overlook. Shall we trust the matters of the next world to the chance thoughts of our own minds, which come this moment, and go the next, and may not be at hand when the time of employing them arrives, like unreal visions, having no substance and no permanence? This world is Satan's efficacious Form, it is the instrument through which he spreads out in order and attractiveness his many snares; and these doubtless will engross us, unless we also give form to the spiritual objects towards which we pray and labour. How short are the seasons which most men have to give to prayer! Before they can collect their memories and minds, their leisure is almost over, even if they have the power to dismiss the thoughts of this world, which just before engaged them. Now Forms of prayer do this *for* them. They keep the ground occupied, that Satan may not encroach upon the seasons of devotion. They are a standing memorial, to which we can recur as to a temple of God, finding every thing in order for our worship as soon as we go into it, though the time allotted us at morning and evening be ever so circumscribed.

6. And this use of Forms in prayer becomes great, beyond power of estimating, in the case of those multitudes of men, who, after going on well for a while, fall into sin. If even conscientious men require continual aid to be reminded of the next world, how extreme is the need of those who try to forget it! It cannot be denied, fearful as it is to reflect upon it, that far the greater number of those who come to manhood, for a while (at least) desert the God who has redeemed them; and, then, if in their earlier years they have learned and used no prayers or psalms by which to worship Him, what is to keep them from blotting altogether from their minds the thought of religion? But here it is that the Forms of the Church have ever served her children, both to restrain them in their career of sin, and to supply them with ready utterance on their repentance. Chance words and phrases of her services adhere to their memories, rising up in moments of tempta-

tion or of trouble, to check or to recover them. And hence it happens, that in the most irreligious companies a distinction is said to be observable between those who have had the opportunity of using our public Forms in their youth, and those whose religious impressions have not been thus happily fortified ; so that, amid their most reckless mirth, and most daring pretence of profligacy, a sort of secret reverence has attended the wanderers, restraining them from that impiety and profaneness in which the others have tried to conceal from themselves the guilt and peril of their doings.

And again on their repentance, (should they be favoured with so high a grace,) what friends do they seem to find amid their gloom in the words they learned in their boyhood,—a kindly voice, aiding them to say what they otherwise would not know how to say, guiding and composing their minds upon those objects of faith which they ought to look to, but cannot find of themselves, and so (as it were) interceding for them with the power of the blessed Spirit, while nature can but groan and travail in pain ! Sinners as they are by their own voluntary misdeeds, and with a prospect of punishment before them, enlightened by but few and faint gleams of hope, what shall keep them from feverish restlessness, and all the extravagance of fear, what shall soothe them into a fixed resigned waiting for their Judge, and such lowly efforts to obey Him, however poorly, as become a penitent, but those words, long buried in their minds, and now rising again as if with the life of their uncorrupted boyhood ? It requires no great experience of sick beds to verify the truth of this statement. Blessed, indeed, is the power of those formularies, which thus succeed in throwing a sinner for a while out of himself, and bringing before him the scenes of his youth, his guardian friends now long departed, their ways and their teaching, their pious services, and their peaceful end ; and though all this is an excitement, and lasts but for a season, yet, if improved, it may be converted into an habitual contemplation of persons and deeds which now live to God, though removed hence,—if improved by acting upon it, it will become an abiding motive to seek the world to come, an abiding persuasion, winning him from the works of darkness, and raising him to the humble hope of future acceptance with his Saviour and Judge.

7. Such is the force of association in undoing the evil of past years, and recalling us to the innocence of children. Nor is this all we may gain from the prayers we use, nor are penitent sinners the only persons who can profit by it. Let us recollect for how long a period our prayers have been the standard Forms of devotion in the Church of Christ, and we shall gain a fresh reason for loving them, and a fresh source of comfort in using them. I know different persons will feel differently here,

according to their different turn of mind ; yet surely there are few of us, if we dwell on the thought, but would feel it a privilege to use (for instance, in the Lord's Prayer) the very petitions which Christ spoke. He gave the prayer and used it. His Apostles used it ; all the Saints ever since have used it. When we use it we seem to join company with them. Who does not think himself brought nearer to any celebrated man in history, by seeing his house, or his furniture, or his handwriting, or the very books which were his ? Thus does the Lord's Prayer bring us near to Christ, and to His disciples in every age. No wonder, then, that in past times good men thought this form of prayer so sacred, that it seemed to them impossible to say it too often, as if some especial grace went with the use of it. Nor *can* we use it too often ; it contains in itself a sort of plea for Christ's listening to us ; we cannot, so that we keep our thoughts fixed on its petitions, and use our minds as well as our lips when we repeat it. And what is true of the Lord's Prayer, is in its measure true of most of those prayers which our Church teaches us to use. It is true of the Psalms also, and of the Creeds ; all of which have become sacred, from the memory of saints departed who have used them, and whom we hope one day to meet in heaven.

One caution I give in conclusion as to using these thoughts. Beware lest your religion be one of feeling merely, not of practice. Men may speak in a high imaginative way of the ancient Saints and the Holy Apostolic Church, without making the fervour or refinement of their devotion bear upon their conduct. Many a man likes to be religious in graceful language ; he loves religious tales and hymns, yet is never the better Christian for all this. The works of every day, these are the tests of our glorious contemplations, whether or not they shall be available* to our salvation ; and he who does one deed of obedience for Christ's sake, let him have no imagination and no fine feeling, is a better man, and returns to his home justified rather than the most eloquent speaker, and the most sensitive hearer, of the glory of the Gospel, if such men do not practise up to their knowledge.

* Gal. vi. 15.

SERMON XXI.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

LUKE XX. 37, 38.

"Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him."

THESE words of our Saviour show us how much more there is in Scripture than at first sight appears. God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, and called Himself "the God of Abraham;" and Christ tells us, that in this simple announcement was contained the promise that Abraham should rise again from the dead. In truth, if we may say it with reverence, the All-wise, All-knowing God, cannot speak without meaning many things at once. He sees the end from the beginning; He understands the numberless connexions and relations of all things one with another. Every word of His is full of instruction, looking many ways; and though it is not often given to us to know these various senses, and we are not at liberty to attempt lightly to imagine them, yet, as far as they are told us, and as far as we may reasonably infer them, we must thankfully accept them. Look at Christ's words, and this same character of them strikes us; whatever He says is fruitful in meaning, and refers to many things. It is well to keep this in mind when we read Scripture; for it may hinder us from self-conceit, from studying it in an arrogant critical temper, and from *giving over* reading it, as if we had got from it all that can be learned.

Now let us consider in what sense the text contains a promise of a resurrection, and see what instruction may be gained from knowing it.

When God called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He implied that those holy patriarchs were still alive, though they were no more seen on earth. This may seem evident at first sight; but it may be asked, how the text proves that their *bodies* would live; for, if their *souls* were still living, that would be enough to account for their being still called in the Book of Exodus, servants of God. This is the point to be considered. Our Blessed Lord seems to tell us, that in some sense

or other Abraham's *body* might be considered still alive as a pledge of his resurrection, though it was dead in the common sense in which we apply the word. His announcement is, Abraham *shall* rise from the dead, because in truth, he *is* still alive. He cannot in the end be held under the power of the grave, more than a sleeping man can be kept from waking. Abraham is still alive in the dust, though not risen thence. He is alive because all God's saints live to Him, though they seem to perish.

It may seem a paradox to say, that our bodies, even when dead, are still alive ; but since our Lord seems to countenance us in saying so, I will say it, though a strange saying, because it has an instructive meaning. We are apt to talk about our bodies as if we knew how or what they really were ; whereas we only know what our eyes tell us. They seem to grow, to come to maturity, to decay ; but after all we know no more about them than meets our senses, and there is, doubtless, much which God sees in our material frames, which we cannot see. We have no direct cognizance of what may be called the substantive existence of the body, only of its accidents. Again, we are apt to speak of *soul and body*, as if we could distinguish between them, and knew much about them ; but for the most part we use words without meaning. It is useful indeed to make the distinction, and Scripture makes it ; but after all, the Gospel speaks of our nature, in a religious sense, *as one*. Soul and body make up one man, which is born once, and never dies. Philosophers of old time thought the soul indeed might live for ever, but that the body perished at death ; but Christ tells us otherwise ; He tells us the body will live for ever. In the text, He seems to intimate that it never really dies ; that we lose sight indeed of what *we* are accustomed to see, but that God still sees the elements of it which are not exposed to our senses.

God graciously called Himself *the God of Abraham*. He did not say the God of Abraham's *soul*, but simply of *Abraham*. He blest Abraham, and He gave him eternal life ; not to his soul only without his body, but to Abraham as one man. And so He is *our* God, and it is not given to us to distinguish between what He does for our different natures, spiritual and material. These are mere words ; each of us may feel himself to be one, and that one being, in all its substantial parts and attributes, will never die.

You will see this more clearly by considering what our Saviour says about the blessed Sacrament of His Supper. He says He will give us His flesh to eat.* How is this done ? we do not know. He gives it

* John vi. 51.

under the outward symbols of bread and wine. But in what real sense is the consecrated bread His body? It is not told us, we may not inquire. We say indeed *spiritually, sacramentally, in a heavenly way*; but this is in order to impress on our minds religious, and not carnal notions of it. All we are concerned to know is, *the effect* upon us of partaking this blessed food. Now observe what he tells us about that. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* Now there is no distinction made here between soul and body. Christ's blessed Supper is food to us altogether, *whatever* we are, soul, body, and all. It is the seed of eternal life within us, the food of immortality, to "preserve our body and soul unto everlasting life"† The forbidden fruit wrought in Adam unto death; but this is the fruit which makes us live for ever. Bread sustains us in this *temporal* life; the consecrated bread is the means of *eternal* strength for soul and body. Who could live this visible life without earthly food? And in the same general way the Supper of the Lord is the "*meat*" of our living for ever. We have no reason for thinking we shall live for ever unless we eat it, no more than we have reason to think our temporal life will be sustained without meat and drink. God *can*, indeed, sustain us, "not by bread alone;" but this is His *ordinary* means, which His will has made such. He can sustain our immortality without the Christian Sacraments, as He sustained Abraham and the other saints of old time; but under the Gospel these are His *means*, which He appointed at His will. We eat the sacred bread, and our bodies become sacred; they are not ours; they are Christ's; they are instinct with that flesh which saw not corruption; they are inhabited by His Spirit; they become immortal; they die but to appearance, and for a time; they spring up when their sleep is ended, and reign with Him for ever.

The inference to be drawn from this doctrine is plain. Among the wise men of the heathen, as I have said, it was usual to speak slightly and contemptuously of the mortal body; they knew no better. They thought it scarcely a part of their real selves, and fancied they should be in a better condition without it. Nay, they considered it to

* John vi. 53, 54.

† "In the Supper of the Lord there is no vain ceremony, no bare sign, no untrue figure of a thing absent; but as the Scripture says, . . . the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, in a marvellous incorporation, which by the operation of the Holy Ghost . . . is through faith wrought in the souls of the faithful, whereby not only their souls live to eternal life, but they surely trust to win their bodies a resurrection to immortality."—*Homily on the Sacrament*, Part I.

be the cause of their sinning ; that the soul of man was pure, and the material body was gross, and defiled the soul. *We* have been taught the truth, viz. that sin is a disease of *our minds*, of ourselves : and that all of us, not body alone, but soul and body, is naturally corrupt, and that Christ has redeemed and cleansed whatever we are, sinful soul and body. Accordingly *their* chief hope in death was the notion they should be rid of their body. Feeling they were sinful, and not knowing how, they laid the charge on their body ; and knowing they were badly circumstanced here, they thought death perchance might be a change for the better. Not that they rested on the hope of returning to a God and Father, but they thought to be unshackled from the earth, and able to do what they would. It was consistent with this slighting of their earthly tabernacle, that they burned the dead bodies of their friends, not burying them as we do, but consuming them as a mere worthless case of what had been precious, and was then an incumbrance to the ground. Far different is the temper which the glorious light of the Gospel teaches us. Our bodies shall rise again and live for ever ; they may not be irreverently handled. *How* they will rise we know not ; but surely if the word of Scripture be true, the body from which the soul departed shall come to life. There are some truths, addressed solely to our faith, not to our reason ; not to our reason, because we know so little about "the power of God," (in our Saviour's words,) that we have nothing to reason *upon*. One of these, for instance, is the presence of Christ in the Sacrament. *We know* we eat His Body and Blood ; but it is our wisdom not curiously to ask how or whence, not to give our thoughts range, but to take and eat and profit thereby. This is the secret of gaining the blessing promised. And so, as regards the resurrection of the dead, we have no means or ground of argument. We cannot determine in what exact sense our bodies will be on the resurrection the same as they are at present, but we cannot harm ourselves by taking God's declaration simply and acting upon it. And it is, as believing this comfortable truth, that the Christian Church put aside that old irreverence of the funeral pile, and consecrated the ground for the reception of the saints that sleep. We deposit our departed friends calmly and thoughtfully, in faith ; not ceasing to love or remember that which once lived among us, but marking the place where it lies, as believing that God has set His seal upon it, and His Angels guard it. His Angels, surely, guard the bodies of His servants ; Michael the Archangel, thinking it no unworthy task to preserve them from the powers of evil.* Especially those like Moses, who fall "in

* Jude 9.

the wilderness of the people," whose duty has called them to danger and suffering, and who die a violent death, these, too, if they have eaten of that incorruptible bread, are preserved safe till the last day. There are, who have not the comfort of a peaceful burial. They die in battle, or on the sea, or in strange lands, or as the early believers, under the hands of persecutors. Horrible tortures, or the mouths of wild beasts have ere now dishonoured the sacred bodies of those who had fed upon Christ; and diseases corrupt them still. This is Satan's work, the expiring efforts of his fury, after his overthrow by Christ. Still, as far as we can, *we* repair these insults of our Enemy, and tend honourably and piously those tabernacles in which Christ has dwelt. And in this view, what a venerable and fearful place is a Church, in and around which the dead are deposited! Truly it is chiefly sacred, as being the spot where God has for ages manifested Himself to His servants; but add to this the thought, that it is the actual resting-place of those very servants, through successive times, who still live unto Him. The dust around us will one day become animate. We may ourselves be dead long before, and not see it. We ourselves may elsewhere be buried, and should it be our exceeding blessedness to rise to life eternal, we may rise in other places, far in the east or west. But, as God's word is sure, what is sown is raised; the earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, shall become glory to glory, and life to the living God, and a true incorruptible image of the spirit made perfect. Here the saints sleep, here they shall rise. A great sight will a Christian country then be, if earth remains what it is; when holy places pour out the worshippers who have for generations kept vigil therein, waiting through the long night for the bright coming of Christ! And, if this be so, what pious composed thoughts should be ours when we enter Churches! God indeed is every where, and His Angels go to and fro; yet can they be more worthily employed in their condescending care of man, than where good men sleep? In the service of the Communion we magnify God together with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of heaven. Surely there is more meaning in this than we know of; what a "dreadful" place would this appear if our eyes were opened as those of Elisha's servant! "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

On the other hand, if the dead bodies of Christians are honourable, so doubtless are the living; *because* they have had their blessedness when living, *therefore* have they in their sleep. He who does not honour his own body as something holy unto the Lord, may indeed revere the dead, but it is then a mere superstition, not an act of piety. To reverence holy places (right as it is) will not profit a man unless he

reverences *himself*. Consider what it is to be partaker of the Body and Blood of Christ. We pray God, in our Church's language, that "our sinful bodies may become clean through His body;" and we are promised in Scripture, that our bodies shall be *temples of the Holy Ghost*. How should we study, then, to cleanse them from all sin, that they may be true members of Christ! We are told that the peril of disease and death attends the unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper. Is this wonderful, considering the strange sin of receiving it into a body disgraced by wilful disobedience? All that defiles it, intemperance or other vice, all that is unbecoming, all that is disrespectful to Him who has bought our bodies with a price, must be put aside.* Hear St. Paul's words, "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more . . . likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin . . . let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."† "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His indwelling Spirit . . . If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."‡

Work together with God, therefore, my brethren, in this work of your redemption. While He feeds you, prepare for the heavenly feast; "discern the Lord's body" when it is placed before you, and suitably treasure it afterwards. Lay up year by year this seed of life within you, believing it will one day bear fruit. "Believe that ye receive it, and ye shall have it."|| Glorious, indeed, will be the spring time of the Resurrection, when all that seemed dry and withered will bud forth and blossom. The glory of Lebanon will be given it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; the fir tree for the thorn, the myrtle tree for the briar; and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before us in singing. Who would miss being of that company? Wretched men they will then appear, who now for a season enjoy the pleasures of sin. Wretched, who follow their own selfish will, instead of walking by faith, who are now idle, instead of trying to serve God, who are set upon the world's vanities, or who scoff at religion, or who allow themselves in known sin, who live in anger, or malice, or pride, or covetousness, who do not continually strive to become better and holier, who are afraid to profess themselves Christians and take up their cross and follow Christ. May the good Lord make us all willing to follow Him! may he rouse the slumbers, and raise them to a new life here, that they may inherit His eternal kingdom hereafter!

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

† Rom. vi. 9—12.

‡ Rom. viii. 11.

|| Mark xi. 24.

SERMON XXII.

THE CHRISTIAN WITNESSES

ACTS x. 40, 41.

“Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.”

It might have been expected, that, on our Saviour's rising again from the dead, He would have shown Himself to very great numbers of people, and especially to those who crucified Him ; whereas, we know from the history, that, far from this being the case, He showed Himself only to chosen witnesses, chiefly his immediate followers ; and St. Peter avows this in the text. This seems at first sight strange. We are apt to fancy the resurrection of Christ as some striking visible display of His glory, such as God vouchsafed from time to time to the Israelites in Moses' time ; and considering it in the light of a public triumph, we are led to imagine the confusion and terror which would have overwhelmed His murderers, had He presented Himself alive before *them*. Now, thus to reason, is to conceive Christ's kingdom of *this* world which it is not ; and to suppose that then Christ came to judge the world, whereas that judgment will not come till the last day, when in very deed those wicked men *shall* “look on Him whom they have pierced.”

But even without insisting upon the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, which seems to be the direct reason why Christ did not show Himself to all the Jews after His resurrection, other distinct reasons may be given, instructive too. And one of these I will now set before you.

This is the question, “Why did not our Saviour show Himself after His resurrection to all the people ? why only to witnesses chosen before of God ?” and this is my answer : “Because this was the most effectual means of propagating His religion through the world.”

After His resurrection, He said to His disciples, "Go, convert all nations:"* this was His especial charge. If, then, there are grounds for thinking that, by showing Himself to a few rather than to many, He was more surely advancing this great object, the propagation of the Gospel, this is a sufficient reason for our Lord's having so ordained; and let us thankfully receive His dispensation, as He has given it.

1. Now consider what would have been the probable effect of a public exhibition of His resurrection. Let us suppose that our Saviour had shown Himself as openly as before He suffered; preaching in the Temple and in the streets of the city; traversing the land with His Apostles, and with multitudes following to see the miracles which He did. What would have been the effect of this? Of course, what it had already been. His former miracles had not effectually moved the body of the people; and, doubtless, this miracle too would have left them as it found them, or worse than before. They might have been more startled at the time; but why should this amazement last? When the man taken with a palsy was suddenly restored at His word, the multitude were all amazed, and glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things to-day."† What *could* they have said and felt more than this, when "one rose from the dead?" In truth, this is the way of the mass of mankind in all ages, to be influenced by sudden fears, sudden contrition, sudden earnestness, sudden resolves, which disappear as suddenly. Nothing is done effectually through untrained human nature; and such is ever the condition of the multitude. Unstable as water, it cannot excel. One day it cried Hosanna; the next, Crucify Him. And had our Lord appeared to them *after* they had crucified Him, of course they would have shouted Hosanna once more; and when He had ascended out of sight, then again they would have persecuted His followers. Besides, the miracle of the Resurrection was much more exposed to the cavils of unbelief than others which our Lord had displayed, than that, for instance, of feeding the multitudes in the wilderness. Had our Lord appeared in public, yet few could have touched Him, and certified themselves it was He Himself. Few, comparatively, in a great multitude could so have seen Him both before and after His death, as to be adequate witnesses of the reality of the miracle. It would have been open to the greater number of them still to deny that He *was* risen. This is the very feeling St. Matthew records. When He appeared on a mountain in Galilee to His apostles and others, as it would seem, (perhaps the five hundred brethren mentioned by St. Paul,) "*some doubted*" whether it were He. How could it be other-

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

† Luke v. 26.

wise? these had no means of ascertaining that they really saw *Him* who had been crucified, dead, and buried. Others, admitting it was Jesus, would have denied that He ever died. Not having seen Him dead on the cross, they might have pretended He was taken down thence before life was extinct, and so restored. This supposition would be a sufficient excuse to those who *wished* not to believe. And the more ignorant part would fancy they had seen a *spirit* without flesh and bones as man has. They would have resolved the miracle into a magical allusion, as the Pharisees had done before, when they ascribed His works to Beelzebub; and would have been rendered no better or more religious by the sight of Him, than the common people are now-a-days by tales of apparitions and witches.

Surely so it would have been; the chief priests would not have been moved at all; and the populace, however they had been moved at the time, would not have been lastingly moved, not practically moved, not so moved as to proclaim to the world what they had heard and seen, to preach the Gospel. This is the point to be kept in view: and consider that the very reason *why* Christ showed Himself at all was in order to raise up *witnesses* to His resurrection, ministers of His word, founders of His Church, and how in the nature of things could a populace ever become such?

2. Now, on the other hand, let us contemplate the means which His Divine Wisdom actually adopted with a view of making His resurrection subservient to the propagation of His Gospel.—He showed himself openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God. It is, indeed, a *general* characteristic of the course of His providence to make the few the channels of His blessings to the many; but in the instance we are contemplating, a few were selected because only a few *could* (humanly speaking) be made instruments. As I have already said, to be witnesses of His resurrection it was requisite to have known our Lord intimately before His death. This was the case with the Apostles; but this was not enough. It was necessary they should be certain it was He Himself, the very same whom they before knew. You recollect how He urged them to handle Him, and be sure that they could testify to His rising again. This is intimated in the text also; “witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.” Nor were they required merely to know Him, but the thought of Him was to be stamped upon their minds as the one master spring of their whole course of life for the future. But men are not easily wrought upon to be faithful advocates of any cause. Not only is the multitude fickle: but the best

men, unless urged, tutored, disciplined to their work, give way; untrained nature has no principles.

It would seem, then, that our Lord gave His attention to a few, because, if the few be gained, the many follow. To these few He showed himself again and again. These He restored, comforted, warned, inspired. He formed them unto Himself, that they might show forth His praise. This His gracious procedure is opened to us in the first words of the book of the Acts. "To the Apostles whom He had chosen." "He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Consider, then, if we may state the alternative reverently, *which* of the two seems the more likely way, even according to a human wisdom, of forming preachers of the Gospel to all nations,—the exhibition of the Resurrection to the Jewish people generally, or this intimate private certifying of it to a few? And remember that, as far as we can understand, the two procedures were inconsistent with each other; for that period of preparatory prayer, meditation, and instruction, which the Apostles passed under our Lord's visible presence for forty days, was to them what it could not have been, had they been following Him from place to place in public, supposing there had been an object in this, and mixing in the busy crowds of the world.

3. I have already suggested, what is too obvious almost to insist upon, that in making a select few the ministers of His mercy to mankind at large, our Lord was but acting according to the general course of His providence. It is plain every great change is effected by the few, not by the many; by the resolute, undaunted, zealous few. True it is that societies sometimes fall to pieces by their own corruption, which is in one sense a change without special instruments chosen or allowed by God; but this is a dissolution, not a work. Doubtless, much may be *undone* by the many, but nothing is *done* except by those who are specially trained for action. In the midst of the famine Jacob's sons stood looking one upon another, but did nothing. One or two men, of small outward pretensions, but with their hearts in their work, these do great things. These are prepared not by sudden excitement, or by vague general belief in the truth of their cause, but by deeply impressed, often repeated instruction; and since it stands to reason that it is easier to teach a few than a great number, it is plain such men always will be few. Such as these spread the knowledge of Christ's resurrection over the idolatrous world. Well, they answered the teaching of their Lord and Master. Their success sufficiently approves to us His wisdom in showing Himself to them, not to all the people.

4. Remember, too, this further reason why the witnesses of the Resurrection were few in number ; viz. because they were on the side of *Truth*. If the witnesses were to be such as really loved and obeyed the Truth, there *could not* be many chosen. Christ's cause was the cause of light and religion, therefore His advocates and ministers were necessarily few. It is an old proverb, (which even the heathen admitted,) that "the many are bad." Christ did not confide His Gospel to the many ; had he done so, we may even say, that it would have been at first sight a presumption against its coming from God. What was the chief work of His whole ministry, but that of choosing and separating *from* the multitude those who should be fit recipients of His Truth ? As He went the round of the country again and again, through Galilee and Judea, He tried the spirits of men the while ; and rejecting the baser sort who "honoured Him with their lips while their hearts were far from Him," He specially chose twelve. The many He put aside for a while as an adulterous and sinful generation, intending to make one last experiment on the mass when the Spirit should come. But His twelve He brought near to Himself at once, and taught them. Then He sifted them, and one fell away ; the eleven escaped as though by fire. *For* these eleven especially He rose again ; He visited *them* and taught *them* for forty days ; for in *them* He saw the fruit of the "travail of His soul and was satisfied ;" in them "He saw His seed, He prolonged His days, and the pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand." These were His witnesses, for they had the love of the Truth in their hearts. "I have choseh you," he says to them, "and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."*

So much then in answer to the question, why did not Christ show Himself to the whole Jewish people after His resurrection. I ask in reply, what would have been the use of it ? a mere passing triumph over sinners whose judgment is reserved for the next world. On the other hand, such a procedure would have interfered with, nay, defeated, the real object of His rising again, the propagation of His Gospel through the world by *means of His own intimate friends* and followers. And further, this preference of the few to the many seems to have been necessary from the nature of man, since all great works are effected, not by a multitude, but by the deep-seated resolution of a few ;—nay, necessary too from man's depravity, for alas ! popular favour is hardly to be expected for the cause of Truth ; and our Lord's instruments were few, if for no other reason, yet at least for this, because more were not

* Jo^hn xv. 16.

to be found, because there were but few faithful Israelites without guile in Israel according to the flesh.

Now, let us observe how much matter, both for warning and comfort, is supplied by this view. We learn from the picture of the *infant* Church what that Church has been ever since, that is, as far as man can understand it. Many are called, few are chosen. We learn to reflect on the great danger there is, lest we be not in the *number* of the chosen, and are warned to "watch and pray that we enter not into temptation," to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," to seek God's mercy in His Holy Church, and to pray to Him ever that He would "fulfil in us the good pleasure of His will," and complete what He once began.

But, besides this, we are comforted too; we are comforted, as many of us as are living humbly in the fear of God. Who those secret ones are, who in the bosom of the visible Church live as saints fulfilling their calling, God only knows. We are in the dark about it. We may indeed know much about ourselves, and we may form somewhat of a judgment about those with whom we are well acquainted. But of the general body of Christians we know little or nothing. It is our duty to consider them as Christians, to take them as we find them, and to love them; and it is no concern of ours to debate about their state in God's sight. Without however entering into this question concerning God's secret counsels, let us receive this truth before us for a practical purpose; that is, I speak to *all who* are conscious to themselves that they wish and try to serve God, whatever their progress in religion be, and whether or not they dare apply to themselves, or in whatever degree, the title of Christian in its most sacred sense. All who obey the Truth are on the side of the Truth, and the Truth will prevail. Few in number, but strong in the Spirit, despised by the world, yet making way while they suffered, the twelve Apostles overturned the power of darkness, and established the Christian Church. And let all "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" be quite sure, that weak though they seem, and solitary, yet the "foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The many are "deceitful," and the worldly-wise are "vain;" but he "that feareth the Lord, the same shall be praised." The most excellent gifts of the intellect last but for a season. Eloquence and wit, shrewdness and dexterity, these plead a cause well and propagate it quickly, but it dies with them. It has no root in the hearts of men, and lives not out a generation. It is the consolation of the despised Truth, that its works endure. Its words are few, but they live. Abel's faith to this day "yet speaketh."* The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. "Fret not thy-

* Hebrews xi. 4.

self" then "because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good . . . delight thyself also in Him, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart ; commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass . . . He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day . . . A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of *many* wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholdeth the righteous . . . I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree, yet he passed away, and, lo ! he was not ; yea, I sought him, and he could not be found."* The heathen world made much ado when the Apostles preached the Resurrection. They and their associates were sent out as lambs among wolves ; but they prevailed.

We too, though we are not witnesses of Christ's actual resurrection, are so spiritually. By a heart awake from the dead, and by affections set on heaven, we can as truly and without figure witness that Christ liveth, as they did. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. Truth bears witness by itself to its Divine Author. He who obeys God conscientiously, and lives holily, forces all about him to believe and tremble before the unseen power of Christ. To the world indeed at large he witnesses not ; for few can see him near enough to be moved by his manner of living. But to his neighbours he manifests the Truth in proportion to their knowledge of him ; and some of them, through God's blessing, catch the holy flame, cherish it, and in their turn transmit it. And thus in a dark world Truth still makes way in spite of the darkness, passing from hand to hand. And thus it keeps its station in high places, acknowledged as the creed of nations, the multitude of which are ignorant, the while, on what it rests, how it came there, how it keeps its ground ; and despising it, think it easy to dislodge it. But "the Lord reigneth." He is risen from the dead, "His throne is established of old ; He is from everlasting. The floods have lifted up their voice, the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. His testimonies are very sure ; holiness becometh His house for ever."†

Let these be our thoughts whenever the prevalence of error leads us to despond. When St. Peter's disciple, Ignatius, was brought before the Roman emperor, he called himself Theophorus ; and when the emperor asked the feeble old man why he so called himself, Ignatius said it was because he carried Christ in his breast. He witnessed there was but

* Psalm xxxvii. 1—6. 16, 17. 35, 36.

† Psalm xciii.

One God, who made heaven, earth and sea, and all that is in them, and One Lord Jesus Christ, His Only-begotten Son, "whose kingdom (he added) be my portion!" The emperor asked, "His kingdom, say you, who was crucified under Pilate?" "His (answered the Saint) who crucified my sin in me, and who has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under the feet of those who carry Him in their hearts: as it is written, 'I dwell in them and walk in them.'"

Ignatius was one against many, as St. Peter had been before him; and was put to death as the Apostle had been:—but he handed on the Truth, in his day. At length we have received it. Weak though we be, and solitary, God forbid we should not in our turn hand it on; glorifying Him by our lives, and in all our words and works witnessing Christ's passion, death, and resurrection.

SERMON XXIII.

CHRISTIAN REVERENCE.

PSALM ii. 11.

"Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

WHY did Christ show Himself to so few witnesses after He rose from the dead? Because *He was a King*, a King exalted upon God's "Holy hill of Zion:" as the Psalm says which contains the text. Kings do not court the multitude, or show themselves as a spectacle at the will of others. They are the rulers of their people, and have their state as such, and are reverently waited on by their great men: and when they show themselves, they do so out of their condescension. They act by means of their servants, and must be *sought* by those who would gain favours from them.

Christ, in like manner, when exalted as the Only-begotten Son of God, did not mix with the Jewish people, as in the days of His humiliation. He rose from the grave in secret, and taught in secret forty days, because "the government was upon His shoulder." He was no longer a servant, washing His disciples' feet, and dependent on the wayward

will of the multitude. He was the acknowledged Heir of all things. His throne was established by a divine decree; and those who desired His salvation, were bound to *seek* His face. Yet not even by those who sought was He at once found. He did not permit the world to approach Him rashly, or curiously to gaze on Him. Those only did he call beside Him who had been His friends, who loved Him. Those only He bade "ascend the hill of the Lord," who had "clean hands and a pure heart, who had not worshipped vanity nor sworn deceitfully." These drew near, and "saw the Lord God of Israel," and so were fitted to bear the news of Him to the people at large. He remained "in His holy Temple;" they from Him proclaimed the tidings of His resurrection, and of His mercy, His free pardon offered to all men, and the promises of grace and glory which His death had procured for all who believe.

Thus are we taught to serve our risen Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Let us pursue the subject thus opened upon us.—Christ's second sojourn on earth (after His resurrection) was *in secret*. The time had been when He "preached openly in the synagogues," and in the public ways; and openly wrought miracles such as man never did. Was there to be no end of His labours in our behalf? His *death* "finished" them; afterwards He taught His *followers* only. Who shall complain of His withdrawing himself at last from the world, when it was of His own spontaneous loving-kindness that He ever showed Himself at all?

Yet it must be borne in mind, that even before He entered into His glory, Christ spoke and acted as a King. It must not be supposed that, even in the days of His flesh, He could forget who He was, or "behave Himself unseemly" by any weak submission to the will of the Jewish people. Even in the lowest acts of His self-abasement, still He showed His greatness. Consider His conduct when He washed St. Peter's feet, and see if it were not calculated (assuredly it was) to humble, to awe, and subdue, the very person to whom he ministered. When he taught, warned, pitied, prayed for, His ignorant hearers, He never allowed them to relax their reverence or to overlook His condescension. Nay, he did not allow them to praise Him aloud, and publish His acts of grace; as if what is called popularity would be a dishonour to His holy name, and the applause of men would imply their right to censure. The world's praise is akin to contempt. Our Lord delights in the tribute of the secret heart. Such was His conduct in the days of His flesh. Does it not interpret His dealings with us after His resurrection? He was so reserved in His communications of Himself, even when He came to minister, much more would withdraw Himself from the eyes of men when He was exalted over all things.

I have said, that even when a servant, Christ spoke with the authority

of a king; and have given you some proof of it. But it may be well to dwell upon this. Observe then, the difference between His promises, stated doctrinally and generally, and His mode of addressing those who were actually before Him. While He announced God's willingness to forgive *all* repentant sinners, in *all* fulness of loving kindness and tender mercy, yet he did not use supplication to these persons or those, whatever their number or their rank might be. He spoke as one who knew He had great favours to confer, and had *nothing* to gain from those who received them. Far from urging them to accept His bounty, He showed Himself even backward to confer it! inquired into their knowledge and motives, and cautioned them against entering His service without counting the cost of it. Thus sometimes He even repelled men from Him.

For instance: When there went "great multitudes with Him He turned and said unto them, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." These were not the words of one who courted popularity. He proceeds;—"Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? . . . So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."* On the other hand, observe His conduct to the powerful men, and the learned Scribes and Pharisees. There are persons who look up to human power, and who are pleased to associate their names with the accomplished and cultivated of this world. Our Blessed Lord was as inflexible towards these, as towards the crowds which followed Him. They asked for a sign; He named them "an evil and adulterous generation," who refused to profit by what they had already received.† They asked Him, whether He did not confess Himself to be one with God; but He, rather than tell such proud disputers, seemed even to abandon His own real claim, and made His former clear words ambiguous.‡ Such was the King of Israel in the eyes both of the multitude and of their rulers; a "hard saying," a "rock of offence even to the disobedient," who came to Him "with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him." Continue this survey to the case of individuals, and it will still appear, that, loving and merciful as He was most abundantly, yet that He showed both His power and His grace with reserve, even to them, as well as to the fickle many, or the unbelieving Pharisees.

One instance is preserved to us of a person addressing Him, with some

* Luke xiv. 25—33.

† Matt. xii. 39, xxi. 23—27.

‡ John x. 30—37.

notions, indeed, of His greatness, but in a light and careless tone. The narrative is instructive from the mixture of good and bad which the inquirer's character displays.* He was young, and wealthy, and is called "a ruler;" yet was anxious for Christ's favour. So far was well. Nay, he "came running, and kneeled to Him." And he *seem'd* to address Him in what would generally be considered as respectful terms: "Good Master," he said. Yet our Saviour saw in his conduct a deficiency;—"One thing thou lackest:" viz. *devotion* in the true sense of the word,—a giving himself up to Christ. This young man seems to have considered religion as an easy work, and thought he could live as the world, and yet serve God acceptably. In consequence, we may suppose, he had little right notion of the dignity of a Messenger from God. He did not associate the Ministers of religion with awful prospects beyond the grave, in which he was interested; nor *reverence* them accordingly, though he was not without some kind of *respect* for them. Doubtless he thought he was *honouring* our Lord when he called Him "*Good Master*;" and would have been surprised to hear his attachment to sacred subjects and appointments called in question. Yet our Saviour rejected such half homage, and rebuked what even seemed piously offered.—"*Why* callest thou Me good?" He asked: "There is none good but One, that is, God;" as if He said, "Observest thou *what* words thou art using as words of course? '*Good Master*'—am I accounted by thee as a teacher of man's creation, and over whom man has power, and accosted by a form of honour, which through length of time, has lost its meaning; or am I acknowledged to come and have authority from Him who is the only source of goodness?" Nor did our Lord relax His severity even after this reproof. Expressly as it is told us, "*He loved him*," and spoke to him therefore in great compassion and mercy, yet He strictly charged him to sell all he had and give it away, if he would show he was in earnest, and He sent him away "sorrowful."

You may recollect, too, our Lord's frequent inquiry into the *faith* of those who came to Him. This arose, doubtless, from the same rule,—a regard to His own Majesty as a King. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."† He did not work miracles as a mere display of power; or allow the world profanely to look on as at some exhibition of art. In this respect, as in others, even Moses and Elias stand in contrast with Him. Moses wrought miracles before Pharaoh to rival the magicians of Egypt. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to bring down fire from heaven. The Son of God deigned not to exert His power before Herod, after Moses' pattern,

* Matt. xix. 16—22. Mark. x. 17—22. Luke xviii. 18—23. † Mark ix. 23.

nor to be judged by the multitude as Elijah. He subdued the power of Satan at His own seasons ; but when the Devil tempted Him and demanded a miracle in proof of His Divinity, He would do none.

Further, even when an inquirer showed earnestness, still He did not try to gain Him over by smooth representations of His doctrine. He declared indeed, the general characteristic of His doctrine, "My yoke is easy ;" but "He made himself strange, and spake roughly" to those whom came to Him. Nicodemus was another ruler of the Jews, who sought Him, and he professed his belief in His miracles and Divine mission. Our Saviour answered in these severe words ;—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Such was our Saviour's conduct even during the period of His ministry ; much more might we expect it to be such, when He was risen from His state of servitude, and such we find it.

No man saw Him rise from the grave. His Angels indeed beheld it ; but His earthly followers were away, and the heathen soldiers were not worthy. They saw, indeed, the great Angel, who rolled away the stone from the opening of the tomb. This was Christ's servant ; but Him they saw not. *He* was on His way to see His own faithful and mourning followers. To these He had revealed His doctrine during His humiliation, and called them "His Friends."* First of all, He appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden itself where He had been buried ; then to the other women who ministered unto Him ; then to the two disciples travelling to Emmaus ; then to all the Apostles separately ; besides, to Peter and to James, and to Thomas in the presence of them all. Yet not even these, His friends, had free access to Him. He said to Mary, "Touch Me not." He came and left them according to His own pleasure. When they saw Him, they felt an awe which they had not felt during His ministry. While they doubted if it were He, "None of them," St. John says, "durst ask Him, Who art Thou ? believing that it was the Lord."† However, as kings have their days of state, on which they show themselves publicly to their subjects, so our Lord appointed a meeting of His disciples, when they might see Him. He had determined this even before His crucifixion ; and the Angels reminded them of it. "He goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see Him, as he said unto you."‡ The place of meeting was a mountain ; the same (it is supposed) on which He had been transfigured ; and the number who saw Him there was five hundred at once, if we join St. Paul's account to that in the Gospels.

* Matt. xiii. 11. John xv. 15.

† John xxi. 12.

‡ Mark xvi. 7.

At length, after forty days, He was taken from them ; He ascended up, "and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Are *we* to feel less humble veneration for Him now, than His Apostles then ? Though He is our Saviour, and has removed all slavish fear of death, and judgment, are we, therefore to make light of the prospect before us, as if we were sure of that reward which He bids us struggle for ? Assuredly, we are still to "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with reverence,"—to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so we perish from the right way, if His wrath be kindled, yea but a little." In a Christian's course, *fear and love must go together*. And this is the lesson to be deduced from our Saviour's withdrawing from the world after His resurrection. He showed His love for men by dying for them and rising again. He maintained his honour and great glory by retiring from them, when His merciful purpose was attained, that they might seek Him if they would find Him. He ascended to His Father out of our sight. Sinners would be ill company for the exalted King of Saints. When we have been duly prepared to see Him, we shall be given to approach Him.

In heaven, love will absorb fear ; but in this world, *fear and love must go together*. No one can love God aright without fearing Him ; though many fear Him, and yet do not love Him. Self-confident men, who do not know their own hearts, or the reasons they have for being dissatisfied with themselves, do not fear God, and they think this bold freedom is to love Him. Deliberate sinners fear but cannot love Him. But devotion to Him consists in love and fear, as we may understand from our ordinary attachment to each other. No one really loves another, who does not feel a certain reverence towards him. When friends transgress this sobriety of affection, they may indeed continue associates for a time, but they have broken the bond of union. It is mutual respect which makes friendship lasting. So again, in the feelings of inferiors towards superiors. Fear must go before love. Till he who has authority shows he has it and can use it, his forbearance will not be valued duly, his kindness will look like weakness. We learn to condemn what we do not fear ; and we cannot love what we condemn. So in religion also. We cannot understand Christ's mercies till we understand His power, His glory, His unspeakable holiness, and our demerits ; that is, until we first fear Him. Not that fear comes first, and then love ; for the most part they will proceed together. Fear is allayed by the love of Him, and our love sobered by our fear of Him. Thus He draws us on with encouraging voice amid the terrors of His threatenings. As in the young ruler's case, He loves us, yet speaks harshly to us that we may learn to cherish mixed feelings towards Him.

He hides Himself from us, and yet calls us on, that we may hear His voice as Samuel did, and, believing, approach Him with trembling. This may seem strange to those who do not study the Scriptures, and to those who do not know what it is earnestly to seek after God. But in proportion as the state of mind is strange, so is there in it, therefore, untold and surpassing pleasure to those who partake it. The bitter and the sweet, strangely tempered, thus leave upon the mind the lasting taste of Divine Truth, and satisfy it; not so harsh as to be loathed; nor of that insipid sweetness which attends enthusiastic feelings, and is wearisome when it becomes familiar. Such is the feeling of conscience too, God's original gift; how painful! yet who would lose it! "I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments."* This is David's account of it. Ezekiel describes something of the same feeling, when the Spirit lifted him up and took him away, "and he went in bitterness, in the heat of his spirit," "the hand of the Lord" being "strong upon him."†

Now how does this apply to us here assembled? Are we in danger of speaking or thinking of Christ irreverently? I do not think we are in any immediate danger of deliberate profaneness; but we are in great danger of this, viz. first, of allowing ourselves to appear profane, and secondly, of gradually becoming irreverent, while we are pretending to be so. Men do not begin by *intending* to dishonour God; but they are afraid of the ridicule of others: they are ashamed of appearing religious; and thus are led to pretend that they are worse than they really are. They say things which they do not mean; and, by a miserable weakness, allow actions and habits to be imputed to them which they dare not really indulge in. Hence they affect a liberty of speech which only befits the companions of evil spirits. They take God's name in vain, to show that they can do what evils do, and they invoke the evil spirit, or speak familiarly of all that pertains to him, and deal about curses wantonly, as though they were not firebrands,—as if acknowledging the Author of Evil to be their great master and lord. Yes! he *is* a master who allows himself to be served without trembling. It is his very art to lead men to be at ease with him, to think lightly of him, and to trifle with him. He will submit to their ridicule, take (as it were) their blows, and pretend to be their slave, that he may ensnare them. *He* has no dignity to maintain, and he waits his time when his malice shall be gratified. So it has ever been all over the earth. Among all nations it has been his aim to make men laugh at him; going to and

* Psalm cxix. 131.

† Ezek. iii. 14.

fro upon the earth, and walking up and down in it, hearing and rejoicing in that light perpetual talk about him, which is his *worship*.

Now, it is not to be supposed that all this careless language can be continued without its affecting a man's heart at last ; and this is the second danger I spoke of. Through a false shame, we disown religion with our lips, and next our words affect our thoughts. Men at last become the cold indifferent profane characters they professed themselves to be. They think contemptuously of God's Ministers, Sacraments and Worship ; they slight His word, rarely looking into it, and never studying it. They undervalue all religious profession, and, judging of others by themselves, impute the conscientious conduct they witness to bad motives. Thus they are in heart infidels ; though they may not formally be such, and may attempt to disguise their own unbelief under pretence of objecting to one or other of the doctrines or ordinances of religion. And should a time of temptation come, when it would be *safe* to show themselves as they really are, they will (almost unawares) throw off their profession of Christianity, and join themselves to the scoffing world.

And how must Christians, on the other hand, treat such heartless men ? They have our Lord's example to imitate. Not that they dare precisely follow the conduct of him who had no sin. They dare not assume to themselves any honour on their own account ; and they are bound, especially if they are His Ministers, to humble themselves as the Apostles did, and "going out to the highways and hedges, (as it were) compel"* men to be saved. Yet, while they use greater earnestness of entreaty than their Lord, they must not forget His dignity the while, who sends them. He manifested His love towards us, "in deed and in truth," and we, His Ministers, declare it in word ; yet for the very reason that it is so abundant, we must in very gratitude learn reverence towards Him. We must not take advantage (so to say) of His goodness ; or misuse the powers committed to us. Never must we solicitously press the truth upon those who do not profit by what they already possess. It dishonours Christ, while it does the scorner harm, not good. It is casting pearls before swine. We must wait for all opportunities of being useful to men, but beware of attempting too much at once. We must impart the Scripture doctrines, in measure and season, as they can bear them ; not being eager to recount them all, rather, hiding them from the world. Seldom must we engage in controversy or dispute ; for it lowers the sacred truths to make them a subject for ordinary debate. Common propriety suggests rules like these at once. Who would speak freely

* Luke xiv. 23.

about some revered friend in the presence of those who did not value him? or who would think he could with a few words overcome their indifference towards him? or who would hastily dispute about him when his hearers had no desire to be made love him?

Rather, shunning all intemperate words, let us show our light before men by our *works*. Here we must be safe. In doing justice, showing mercy, speaking the truth, resisting sin, obeying the Church,—in thus glorifying God, there can be no irreverence. And, above all, let us look at home, check all bad thoughts, presumptuous imaginings, vain desires, discontented murmurings, self-complacent reflections, and so in our hearts ever honour him in secret, whom we reverence by open profession.

May God guide us in a dangerous world, and deliver us from evil. And may He rouse to serious thought, by the power of His Spirit, all who are living in profaneness or unconcern.

SERMON XXIV.

THE RELIGION OF THE DAY.

HEBREWS xii. 28, 29.

‘Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.’

IN every age of Christianity, since it was first preached, there has been what may be called a *religion of the world*, which so far imitates the one true religion, as to deceive the unstable and unwary. The world does not oppose religion *as such*. I may say, it never has opposed it. In particular, it has, in all ages, acknowledged in one sense or other the Gospel of Christ, fastened on one or other of its characteristics, and professed to embody this in its practice; while by neglecting the other parts of the holy doctrine, it has, in fact, distorted and corrupted even that portion of it which it has exclusively put forward, and so has contrived to explain away the whole;—for he who cultivates only one precept of the Gospel to the exclusion of the rest, in reality attends to no part at all. Our duties *balance* each other; and though we are too

sinful to perform them all perfectly, yet we may in some measure be performing them all, and preserving the balance on the whole ; whereas, to give ourselves only to this or that commandment is to incline our minds in a wrong direction, and at length to pull them down to the earth, which is the aim of our adversary, the devil.

It is his *aim* to break our strength ; to force us down to the earth,—to bind us there. The world is his instrument for this purpose ; but he is too wise to set it in open opposition to the Word of God. No ! he affects to be a prophet like the prophets of God. He calls his servants also prophets ; and they mix with the scattered remnant of the true Church, with the solitary Micaïans who are left upon the earth, and speak in the name of the Lord. And in one sense they speak the truth ; but it is not the whole truth ; and we know, even from the common experience of life, that half the truth is often the most gross and mischievous of falsehoods.

Even in the first age of the Church, while persecution still raged, he set up a counter religion among the philosophers of the day, partly like Christianity, but in truth a bitter foe to it ; and it deceived and shipwrecked the faith of those who had not the love of God in their hearts.

Time went on, and he devised a second idol of the true Christ, and it remained in the temple of God for many a year. The age was rude and fierce. Satan took the darker side of the Gospel ; its awful mysteriousness, its fearful glory, its sovereign inflexible justice ; and here *his* picture of the truth ended, “ God is a consuming fire ;” so declares the text, and we know it. But we know more, viz. that God is love also ; but Satan did not add this to his religion, which became one of *fear*. The religion of the world was then a fearful religion. Superstitions abounded, and cruelties. The noble firmness, the graceful austerity of the true Christian were superseded by forbidding spectres, harsh of eye, and haughty of brow ; and these were the patterns or the tyrants of a beguiled people.

What is Satan’s device in this day ? a far different one ; but perhaps a more pernicious. I will attempt to expose it, or rather to suggest some remarks towards its being exposed, by those who think it worth while to attempt it ; for the subject is too great and too difficult for an occasion such as the present, and, after all, no one can detect falsehood for another ;—every man must do it for himself ; we can but *help* each other.

What is the world’s religion now ? It has taken the brighter side of the Gospel,—its tidings of comfort, its precepts of love ; all darker, deeper views of man’s condition and prospects being comparatively forgotten. This is the religion *natural* to a civilized age, and well has

Satan dressed and completed it into an idol of the Truth. As the reason is cultivated, the taste formed, the affections and sentiments refined, a general decency and grace will of course spread over the face of society, quite independently of the influence of revelation. That beauty and delicacy of thought, which is so attractive in books, extends to the conduct of life, to all we have, all we do, all we are. Our manners are courteous; we avoid giving pain or offence; our words become correct; our relative duties are carefully performed. Our sense of propriety shows itself even in our domestic arrangements, in the embellishment of our houses, in our amusements, and so also in our religious profession. Vice now becomes unseemly and hideous to the imagination, or, as it is sometimes familiarly said, "out of taste." Thus elegance is gradually made the test and standard of virtue, which is no longer thought to possess intrinsic claim on our hearts, or to exist *further than* it leads to the quiet and comfort of others. Conscience is no longer recognized as an independent arbiter of actions, its authority is explained away; partly it is superseded in the minds of men by the so-called moral sense, which is regarded merely as the love of the beautiful; partly by the rule of expediency, which is forthwith substituted for it in the details of conduct. Now conscience is a stern gloomy principle; it tells us of guilt and of prospective punishment. Accordingly, when its terrors disappear, then disappear also, in the creed of the day, those fearful images of Divine wrath with which the Scriptures abound. They are explained away. Every thing is bright and cheerful. Religion is pleasant and easy; benevolence is the chief virtue; intolerance, bigotry, excess of zeal, are the first of sins. Austerity is an absurdity;—even firmness is looked on with an unfriendly, suspicious eye. On the other hand, all open profligacy is discountenanced; drunkenness is accounted a disgrace; cursing and swearing are vulgarities. Moreover, to a cultivated mind, which recreates itself in the varieties of literature and knowledge, and is interested in the ever-accumulating discoveries of science, and the ever-fresh accessions of information, political or otherwise, from foreign countries, religion will commonly seem to be dull, from want of novelty. Hence excitements are eagerly sought out and rewarded. New objects in religion, new systems, and plans, new doctrines, new preachers, are necessary to satisfy that craving which the so-called spread of knowledge has created. The mind becomes morbidly sensitive and fastidious; dissatisfied with things as they are, desirous of a change *as such*, as if alteration must of itself be a relief.

Now I would have you put Christianity for an instant out of your thoughts; and consider whether such a state of refinement as I have attempted to describe, is not that to which men might be brought, quite

independent of religion, by the mere influence of education and civilization; and then again, whether, nevertheless, this mere refinement of mind is not more or less all that is called religion at this day. In other words, is it not the case, that Satan has so composed and dressed out what is the mere natural produce of the human heart under certain circumstances, as to serve his purposes as the counterfeit of the Truth? I do not at all deny that this spirit of the world uses words, and makes professions which it would not adopt except for the suggestions of Scripture; nor do I deny that it takes a general colouring from Christianity, so as really to be modified by it, nay, in a measure enlightened and exalted by it. Again, I fully grant that many persons in whom this bad spirit shows itself, are but partially infected by it, and at bottom, good Christians, though imperfect. Still, after all, here is an existing system, only partially evangelical, built upon worldly principle, yet pretending to be the Gospel, dropping one whole side of it, viz. its austere character, and considering it enough to be benevolent, courteous, candid, correct in conduct, delicate,—though it has no true fear of God, no fervent zeal for His honour, no deep hatred of sin, no horror at the sight of sinners, no indignation and compassion at the blasphemies of heretics, no jealous adherence to doctrinal truth, no especial sensitiveness about the particular means of gaining ends, provided the ends be good, no loyalty to the Holy Apostolic Church, of which the Creed speaks, no sense of the authority of religion as external to the mind: in a word, no seriousness, and therefore is neither hot nor cold, but (in Scripture language) *luke-warm*. Thus the present age is the very contrary to what are commonly called the dark ages; and together with the faults of those ages we have lost their virtues. I say their virtues; for even the errors then prevalent, a persecuting spirit, for instance, fear of religious inquiry, bigotry, these were, after all, but perversions and excesses of *real virtues*, such as zeal and reverence; and we, instead of limiting and purifying them, have taken them away root and branch. Why? because we have not acted from a love of the Truth, but from the influence of the Age. The old generation has passed, and its character with it; a new order of things has arisen. Human society has a new framework, and fosters and develops a new character of mind; and this new character is made by the enemy of our souls, to resemble the Christian's obedience as near as it may, its likeness all the time being but accidental. Meanwhile the Holy Church of God, as from the beginning, continues its course heavenward; despised by the world, yet influencing it, partly correcting it, partly restraining it, and in some happy cases reclaiming its victims, and fixing them firmly and for ever within the lines of the faithful host

militant here on earth, which journeys towards the City of the Great King. God give us grace to search our hearts, lest we be blinded by the deceitfulness of sin ! lest we serve Satan transformed into an Angel of light, while we think we are pursuing true knowledge ; lest, overlooking and ill-treating the elect of Christ here, we have to ask that awful question at the last day, while the truth is bursting upon us, " Lord, *when* saw we Thee a stranger and a prisoner ? " when saw we Thy sacred Word and Servants despised and oppressed, " and did not minister unto Thee ? " *

Nothing shows more strikingly the power of the world's religion, as now described, than to consider the very different classes of men whom it influences. It will be found to extend its sway and its teaching both over the professedly religious and the irreligious.

1. Many religious men, rightly or not, have long been expecting a millenium of purity and peace for the Church. I will not say, whether or not with reason, for good men may well differ on such a subject. But, any how, in the case of those who have expected it, it has become a temptation to take up and recognise the world's religion as already delineated. They have more or less identified their vision of Christ's kingdom with the elegance and refinement of mere human civilization ; and have hailed every evidence of improved decency, every wholesome civil regulation, every beneficent and enlightened act of state policy, as signs of their coming Lord. Bent upon achieving their object, an extensive and glorious diffusion and profession of the Gospel, they have been little solicitous about the *means* employed. They have countenanced and acted with men who openly professed unchristian principles. They have accepted and defended what they considered to be reformations and ameliorations of the existing state of things, though injustice must be perpetrated in order to effect them, or long-cherished rules of conduct, indifferent perhaps in their origin but consecrated by long usage, must be violated. They have sacrificed Truth to expedience. They have strangely imagined that bad men were to be the immediate instruments of the approaching advent of Christ ; and, (like the deluded Jews not many years since in a foreign country,) they have taken, if not for their Messiah (as they did,) at least for their Elijah, their reforming Baptist, the Herald of the Christ, children of this world, and sons of Belial, on whom the anathema of the Apostle lies from the beginning, declaring, " If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." †

2. On the other hand, the form of doctrine, which I have called the

* Matt. xxv. 41.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

religion of the day, is especially adapted to please men of sceptical minds, the opposite extreme to those just mentioned, who have never been careful to obey their conscience, who cultivate the intellect without disciplining the heart, and who allow themselves to speculate freely about what religion *ought to be*, without going to Scripture to discover what it really is. Some persons of this character almost consider religion itself to be an obstacle in the advance of our social and political well-being. But they know human nature requires it; therefore they select the most *rational* form of religion, (so they call it,) which they can devise. Others are far more seriously disposed, but are corrupted by bad example or other cause. But they *all* discard (what they call) gloomy views of religion; they all trust themselves more than God's word, and thus may be classed together; and are ready to embrace the pleasant consoling religion natural to a polished age. They lay much stress on works on *Natural Theology*, and think that all religion is contained in these; whereas, in truth, there is no greater fallacy than to suppose such works in themselves in any true sense to be religious at all. Religion, it has been well observed, is something *relative to us*; a system of commands and promises from God *towards* us. But how are we concerned with the sun, moon, and stars? or with the laws of the universe? how will they teach us our *duty*? how will they speak to *sinners*? They do not speak to sinners at all. They were created *before* Adam fell. They "declare the *glory* of God," but not *His will*. They are all perfect, all harmonious; but that brightness and excellence which they exhibit in their own creation, and the Divine benevolence therein seen, are of little moment to fallen man. We see nothing there of God's *wrath*, of which the conscience of a sinner loudly speaks. So that there cannot be a more dangerous (though a common) device of Satan, than to carry us off from our own secret thoughts, to make us forget our own hearts, which tell us of a God of justice and holiness, and to fix our attention merely on the God who made the heavens; who is *our* God indeed, but not God as manifested to us sinners, but as He shines forth to His Angels, and to His elect hereafter.

When a man has so far deceived himself as to trust his destiny to what the heavens tell him of it, instead of consulting and obeying his conscience, what is the consequence? that at once he misinterprets and perverts the whole tenor of Scripture. It cannot be denied that, pleasant as religious observances are declared in Scripture to be to the holy, yet to men in general they are said to be difficult and distasteful; to all men *naturally* impossible, and by few fulfilled even with the assistances of grace, on account of their wilful corruption. Religion is

said to be against nature, to be against our original will, to require God's aid to make us love and obey it, and to be commonly refused and opposed in spite of that aid. We are expressly told, that "strait is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it;" that we must "*strive*" or struggle "to enter in at the strait gate," for that "many shall *seek* to enter in," but that is not enough, they merely seek and do not find it; and further, that they who do not obtain everlasting life, "shall go into everlasting punishment."* This is the dark side of religion; and the men I have been describing cannot bear to think of it. They shrink from it as too terrible. They easily get themselves to believe that those strong declarations of Scripture do not belong to the present day, or that they are figurative. They have no language within their heart responding to them. Conscience has been silenced. The only information they have received concerning God has been from Natural Theology, and that speaks only of benevolence and harmony; so they will not credit the plain word of Scripture. They seize on such parts of Scripture as seem to countenance their own opinions; they insist on its being commanded us to "rejoice evermore;" and they argue that it is our duty to solace ourselves here, (in moderation of course,) with the goods of this life,—that we have only to be thankful while we use them,—that we need not alarm ourselves,—that God is a merciful God,—that repentance is quite sufficient to atone for our offences,—that though we have been irregular in our youth, yet that is a thing gone by,—that we forget it, and therefore God forgets it,—that the world is, on the whole, very well disposed towards religion,—that we should avoid enthusiasm,—that we should not be over-serious,—that we should have enlarged views on the subject of human nature,—and that we should love all men. This indeed is the creed of shallow men, in *every* age, who reason a little, and feel not at all, and who think themselves enlightened and philosophical. Part of what they say is false, part is true, but misapplied; but why I have noticed it here, is to show how exactly it fits in with what I have already described as the peculiar religion of a civilized age; it fits in with it equally well as does that of the (so called) religious world, which is the opposite extreme.

One further remark I will make about these professedly rational Christians; who, be it observed, often go on to deny the mysteries of the Gospel. Let us take the text:—"Our God is a consuming fire." Now supposing these persons fell upon these words, or heard them urged as an argument against their own doctrine of the unmixed

* Matt. vii. 14. Luke xiii. 24. Matt. xxv. 46.

satisfactory character of our prospects in the world to come, and supposing they did not know what part of the Bible they occurred in, what would they say? Doubtless they would confidently say that they applied only to the Jews and not to Christians; that they only described the Divine Author of the Mosaic Law;* that God formerly spoke in terrors to the Jews, because they were a gross and brutish people, but that civilization has made us quite other men; that our *reason*, not our *fears*, is appealed to, and that the Gospel is love. And yet, in spite of all this argument, the text occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews, written by an Apostle of Christ.

I shall conclude with stating more fully what I mean by the dark side of religion; and what judgment ought to be passed on the superstitious and gloomy.

Here I will not shrink from uttering my firm conviction that it would be a gain to this country, were it vastly more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion, than at present it shows itself to be. Not, of course, that I think the tempers of mind herein implied desirable, which would be an evident absurdity; but I think them infinitely more desirable and more promising than a heathen obduracy, and a cold, self-sufficient, self-wise tranquillity. Doubtless, peace of mind, a quiet conscience, and a cheerful countenance are the gift of the Gospel, and the sign of a Christian; but the same effects (or, rather, what appear to be the same) may arise from very different causes. Jonah slept in the storm,—so did our Blessed Lord. The one slept in an evil security: the Other in “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” The two states cannot be confounded together, they are perfectly distinct; and as distinct is the calm of the man of the world from that of the Christian. Now take the case of the sailors on board the vessel; they cried to Jonah, “What meanest thou, O sleeper?”—so the Apostles said to Christ; “Lord, we perish.” This is the case of the superstitious; they go between the false peace of Jonah and the true peace of Christ; they are better than the one, though far below the Other. Applying this to the present religion of the educated world, full as it is of security and cheerfulness, and decorum, and benevolence, I observe that these appearances may arise either from a great deal of religion, or from the absence of it; they may be the fruits of lightness of mind and a blinded conscience, or of that faith which has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And if this alternative be proposed, I might almost leave it to the common sense of men, (if they could get themselves to think seriously) to which of the two the

* Deut. iv. 24.

temper of the age is to be referred. For myself I cannot doubt, seeing what I see of the world, that it arises from the sleep of Jonah; and it is therefore but a dream of religion, far inferior in worth to the well-grounded alarm of the superstitious, who are awakened and see their danger, though they do not attain so far in faith as to embrace the remedy of it.

Think of this, I beseech you, my brethren, and lay it to heart, as far as you go with me, as you will answer for having heard it at the last day. I would not willingly be harsh; but knowing "that the world lieth in wickedness," I think it highly probable that you, so far as you are in it, (as you must be, and we all must be in our degree,) are, most of you, partially infected with its existing error, that shallowness of religion, which is the result of a blinded conscience; and, therefore, I speak earnestly to you. Believing in the existence of a general plague in the land, I judge that you probably have your share in the sufferings, the voluntary sufferings, which it is spreading among us. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; till you see Him to be a consuming fire, and approach Him with reverence and godly fear, as being sinners, you are not even in sight of the strait gate. I do not wish you to be able to point to any particular time when you renounced the world, (as it is called,) and were converted; this is deceit. Fear and love must go together; always fear, always love, to your dying day. Doubtless;—still you must know what it is to sow in tears here, if you would reap in joy hereafter. Till you know the weight of your sins, and that not in mere imagination, but in practice, not so as merely to confess it in a formal phrase of lamentation, but daily and in your heart in secret, you cannot embrace the offer of mercy held out to you in the Gospel, through the death of Christ. Till you know what it is to fear with the terrified sailors or the Apostles, you cannot sleep with Christ at your Heavenly Father's feet. Miserable as were the superstitions of the dark ages, revolting as are the tortures now in use among the heathen of the East, better, far better is it, to torture the body all one's days, and to make this life a hell upon earth, than to remain in a brief tranquillity here, till the pit at length opens under us, and awakens us to an eternal fruitless consciousness and remorse. Think of Christ's own words:—"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Again, He says, "Fear Him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him." Dare not to think you have got to the bottom of your hearts; you do not know what evil lies there. How long and earnestly must you pray, how many years must you pass in careful obedience, before you have any right to lay aside sorrow and to rejoice in the Lord? In one sense, indeed,

you may take comfort from the first; for, though you dare not yet anticipate you are in the number of Christ's true elect, yet from the first you know he desires your salvation, has died for you, has washed away your sins by baptism, and will ever help you; and this thought must cheer you while you go on to examine and review your lives, and to turn to God in self-denial. But, at the same time, you never can be sure of salvation while you are here; and therefore you must always fear while you hope. Your knowledge of your sins increases with your view of God's mercy in Christ. And this is the true Christian state, and the nearest approach to Christ's calm and placid sleep in the tempest;—not perfect joy and certainty in heaven, but a deep resignation to God's will, a surrender of ourselves, soul and body to Him; hoping indeed, that we shall be saved, but fixing our eyes more earnestly on Him than on ourselves; that is, acting for His glory, seeking to please Him, devoting ourselves to Him in all manly obedience and strenuous good works; and, when we do look within, thinking of ourselves with a certain abhorrence and contempt as being sinners, mortifying our flesh, scourging our appetites, and composedly awaiting that time when, if we be worthy, we shall be stripped of our present selves, and new made in the kingdom of Christ.

SERMON XXV.

SCRIPTURE A RECORD OF HUMAN SORROW.

JOHN v. 2, 3.

"There is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water."

WHAT a scene of misery this pool of Bethesda must have presented! of pain and sickness triumphing unto death; the "blind, halt, withered, and impotent," persuaded by the hope of cure to disclose their sufferings in the eye of day in one large company! This pool was endued, at certain times, with a wonderful virtue by the descent of an Angel into

it ; so that its waters effected the cure of the first who stepped into it, whatever was his disease. However, I shall not speak of this wonderful pool ; nor of our Saviour's miracle, wrought there upon the man who had no one to put him in before the rest, when the water was troubled, and had been for thirty-eight years afflicted with his infirmity. Without entering into these subjects, let us take the text as it stands in the opening of the chapter which contains it, and deduce a lesson from it.

There lay about the pool "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered." This is a painful picture, such as we do not like to dwell upon,—a picture of a chief kind of human suffering, bodily disease ; one which suggests to us and typifies all other suffering,—the most obvious fulfilment of that curse which Adam's fall brought upon his descendants. Now it must strike every one, who thinks at all about it, that the Bible is full of such descriptions of human misery. We know it also abounds in accounts of human sin ; but not to speak of these, it abounds in accounts of human distress and sufferings, of our miserable condition, of the vanity, unprofitableness, and trials of life. The Bible begins with the history of the curse pronounced on the earth and man ; it ends with the book of Revelations, a portion of Scripture fearful for its threats, and its prediction of judgments ; and whether the original curse on Adam be now removed from the world or not, it is certain that God's awful curses, foretold by St. John, are on all sides of us. Surely in spite of the peculiar promises made to the Church in Christ our Saviour, yet as regards the world, the volume of inspiration is still a dreary record, "written within and without with lamentations and mourning and wo." And, further, you will observe that it seems to drop what might be said in favour of this life, and enlarges on the unpleasant side of it. The history passes quickly from the Garden of Eden, to dwell on the sufferings which followed, when our first parents were expelled thence ; and though, in matter of fact, there are traces of paradise still left among us, yet it is evident, Scripture says little of them in comparison of its accounts of human misery. Little does it say concerning the innocent pleasures of life ; of those temporal blessings which rest upon our worldly occupations, and make them easy ; of the blessings which we derive from "the sun and moon and the everlasting hills," from the succession of the seasons and the produce of the earth ;—little about our recreations and our daily domestic comforts ; little about the ordinary occasions of festivity and mirth, which occur in life, and nothing at all about those various other enjoyments which it would be going too much into detail to mention. Human tales and poems are full of pleasant sights and prospects ;—they make things better than they are, and pourtray a sort of imagin-

any perfection ; but Scripture, (I repeat) seems to abstain even from what might be said in praise of human life as it is. We read, indeed, of the feast made when Isaac was weaned, of Jacob's marriage, of the domestic and religious festivities of Job's family ; but these are exceptions in the tenor of the Scripture history. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity ;" "man is born to trouble : " these are its customary lessons. The text is but a specimen of the descriptions repeated again and again throughout Scripture, of human infirmity and misery.

So much is this the case, that thoughtless persons are averse to the Scripture narrative for this very reason. I do not mean bad men, who speak hard presumptuous words against the Bible, and in consequence expose themselves to the wrath of God ; but I speak of *thoughtless* persons ; and of these there are many, who consider the Bible a gloomy book, and on that account seldom look into it, saying that it makes them melancholy. Accordingly there have been attempts made on the other hand to hide this austere character of Scripture, and make it a bright interesting picture of human life. Its stories have before now been profanely embellished in human language, to suit the taste of weak and cowardly minds. All this shows that in the common opinion of mankind, the Bible does not take a pleasant sunshine view of the world.

Now why have I thus spoken of this general character of the sacred history ?—in order to countenance those who complain of it ?—let it not be imagined ;—far from it. God does nothing without some wise and good reason, which it becomes us devoutly to accept and use. He has not given us this dark view of the world without a cause. In truth, this view is the ultimate *true* view of human life. But this is not all ; it is a view which it concerns us much to know. It concerns us (I say) much to be told that this world is, after all, in spite of first appearances and partial exceptions, a dark world ; else we shall be obliged to learn it, (and, sooner or later, we must learn it,) by sad *experience* ; whereas, if we are forewarned, we shall unlearn false notions of its excellence, and be saved the disappointment which follows them. And therefore it is that Scripture omits even what might be said in praise of this world's pleasures ;—not denying their value, such as it is, or forbidding us to use them religiously, but knowing that we are sure to find them out for ourselves without being told of them, and that our danger is on the side, not of undervaluing, but of overvaluing them ; whereas, by being told of the world's vanity, *at first*, we shall learn, (what else we should only attain *at last*,) not indeed to be gloomy and discontented, but to bear a sober and calm heart under a smiling cheerful countenance. This is one chief reason of the sol-

emn character of the Scripture history ; and if we keep it in view, so far from being offended and frightened away by its notes of sorrow, because they grate on the ear at first, we shall steadfastly listen to them, and get them by heart, as a gracious gift from God sent to us, as a remedy for all dangerous overflowing joy in present blessings, in order to save us far greater pain, (if we use the lesson well,) the pain of actual disappointment, such as the overthrow of vainly cherished hopes of lasting good upon earth, will certainly occasion.

Do but consider what is the consequence of ignorance or distrust of God's warning voice, and you will see clearly how merciful He is, and how wise it is to listen to Him. I will not suppose a case of gross sin, or of open contempt for religion ; but let a man have a general becoming reverence for the law and Church of God, and an unhesitating faith in his Saviour Christ, yet suppose him so to be taken with the goods of this world, as (without his being aware of it) to give his heart to them. Let him have many good feelings and dispositions ; but let him love his earthly pursuits, amusements, friends, too well ;—by which I mean, so well as to forget that he is bound to live in the spirit of Abraham's faith, who gave up home, kindred, possessions, all his eye ever loved, at God's word,—in the spirit of St. Paul's faith, who "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord," to win whose favour "he suffered the loss of all things." How will the world go with a man thus forgetful of his real interests ? For a while all will be enjoyment ;—if at any time weariness comes, he will be able to change his pleasure, and the variety will relieve him. His health is good and his spirits high, and easily master and bear down all the accidental troubles of life. So far is well : but, as years roll on, by little and little he will discover that, after all, he is not, as he imagined, possessed of any real substantial good. He will begin to find, and be startled at finding, that the things which once pleased, please less and less, or not at all. He will be unable to recall those lively emotions in which he once indulged ; and he will wonder why. Thus, by degrees, the delightful visions which surrounded him will fade away, and in their stead, melancholy forms will haunt him, such as crowded round the pool of Bethesda. Then will be fulfilled the words of the wise man. The days will have come, "when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them ; the sun and the light and the moon and the stars shall be darkened, and the clouds return after the rain ; then they who look out of the window shall be darkened, the doors shall be shut in the streets, all the daughters of music shall be brought low, fears shall be in the way, and desire shall fail."* Then

* Eccles. xii. 1—5.

a man will begin to be restless and discontented, for he does not know how to amuse himself. Before, he was cheerful only from the natural flow of his spirits, and when such cheerfulness is lost with increasing years, he becomes evil-natured. He has made no effort to change his heart,—to raise, strengthen, and purify his faith,—to subdue his bad passions and tempers. Now their day is come; they have sprang up and begin to domineer. When he was in health, he thought about his farm, or his merchandise, and lived to himself; he laid out his strength on the world, and the world is nothing to him, as a worthless bargain (so to say,) seeing it is nothing worth to one who cannot take pleasure in it. He had no habitual thought of God in the former time, however he might have a general reverence for His name; and now he dreads Him, or, (if the truth must be said) even begins to hate the thought of Him. Where shall he look for succour? Perhaps, moreover, he is a burden to those around him; they care not for him,—he is in their way. And so he will lie year after year, by the pool of Bethesda, by the waters of health, with no one helping him;—unable to advance himself towards a cure, in consequence of his long habits of sin, and others passing him by, perhaps unable to help one who obstinately refuses to be comforted. Thus he has at length full personal, painful experience that this world is really vanity or worse, and all this because he would not believe it from Scripture.

Now should the above description appear overcharged, should it be said that it supposes a man to be possessed of more of the pleasures of life than most men have, and of keener feelings,—should it be said that most men have little to enjoy, and that most of those who have much, go on in an ordinary tranquil way, and take and lose things without much thought, not pleased much in their vigorous days, and not caring much about the change when the world deserts them,—then I must proceed to a more solemn consideration still, on which I do not like to dwell, but would rather leave it for your own private reflection upon it. There is a story in the Gospels of a man who was taken out of this life before he had turned his thoughts heaven-ward, and in another world he lift up his eyes being in torments. Be quite sure that every one of us, even the poorest and the most dull and insensible, is far more attached to this world than he can possibly imagine. We get used to the things about us, and forget they are necessary for our comfort. Every one, when taken out of this world, would miss a great deal that he was used to depend on, and would in consequence be in great discomfort and sorrow in his new abode, as a stranger in an unknown place; every one, that is, who had not, while on earth, made God his Father and Protector,—that Great God who alone will there

be found. We do not, then, mend the matter at all in supposing a man not to find out the world's vanity here; for, even should the world remain his faithful friend, and please him with its goods, to his dying day, still that world will be burnt up at the day of his resurrection; and even had he little of its comforts here, that little he will then miss. Then all men, small and great, will know it to be vanity, and feel their infinite loss if they have trusted it, when all the dead stand before God.

Let this suffice on the use we must make of the solemn view which the Scripture takes of this life. Those disclosures are intended to save us pain, by preventing us enjoying the world unreservedly; that we may use it as not abusing it.

Nor let it seem as if this view of life must make a man melancholy and gloomy. There are, it is true, men of ill-constituted minds, whom it has driven out of the world; but, rightly understood, it has no such tendency. The great rule of our conduct is to take things as they come. He who goes out of his way as shrinking from the varieties of human life which meet him, has weak faith, or a strangely perverted conscience,—he wants elevation of mind. The true Christian rejoices in those earthly things which give joy, but in such a way as not to care for them when they go. For no blessings does he care much, except those which are immortal, knowing that he shall receive all such again in the world to come. But the least and the most fleeting, he is too religious to condemn, considering them God's gift; and the least and most fleeting, thus received, yield a purer and deeper, though a less tumultuous joy. And if he at times refrains, it is lest he should encroach upon God's bounty, or lest by a constant use of it he should forget how to do without it.

Our Saviour gives us a pattern which we are bound to follow. He was a far greater than John the Baptist, yet he came, not with St. John's outward austerity,—condemning the *display* of strictness or gloominess, that we, His followers, might fast the more in private, and be the more austere in our secret hearts. True it is, that such self-command, composure, and inward faith, are not learned in a day; but if they were, why should this life be given us? It is given us as a very preparation time for obtaining them. Only look upon the world in this light;—its sights of sorrows are to calm you, and its pleasant sights to try you. There is a bravery in thus going straight-forward, shrinking from no duty little or great, passing from high to low, from pleasure to pain, and making your principles strong without their becoming formal. Learn to be as the angel, who could descend among the miseries of Bethesda, without losing his heavenly purity or his perfect happiness. Gain healing from troubled waters. Make up your

mind to the prospect of sustaining a certain measure of pain and trouble in your passage through life ; by the blessing of God this will prepare you for it,—it will make you thoughtful and resigned without interfering with your cheerfulness. It will connect you in your own thoughts with the Saints of Scripture, whose lot it was to be patterns of patient endurance ; and this association brings to the mind a peculiar consolation. View yourselves and all Christians as humbly following the steps of Jacob whose days were few and evil ; and David, who in his best estate was as a shadow that declineth, and was withered like grass ; and Elijah who despised soft raiment and sumptuous fare : and forlorn Daniel who led an Angel's life : and be light-hearted and contented, *because* you are thus called to be a member of Christ's pilgrim Church. Realize the paradox of making merry and rejoicing in the world because it is *not* yours. And if you are hard to be affected, (as many men are,) and think too little about the changes of life, going on in a dull way without hope or fear, feeling, neither your need nor the excellence of religion ; then, again, meditate on the mournful histories recorded in Scripture, in order that your hearts may be opened thereby and roused. Read the Gospels in particular ; you there find accounts of sick and afflicted persons in every page as mementos. Above all, you there read of Christ's sufferings, which I am not now called upon to speak of ; but the thought of which is far more than enough to make the world, bright as it may be, look dark and miserable in itself to all true believers, even if the record of *them* were the only sorrowful part of the whole Bible.

And now I conclude, bidding you think much of the Scripture history in the light in which I have put it,—that you may not hereafter find that you have missed one great benefit which it was graciously intended to convey.

SERMON XXVI.

CHRISTIAN MANHOOD.

1 COR. xiii. 11.

“ When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

WHEN our Lord was going to leave the world and return to His Father, He called His disciples *orphans* ; children, as it were, whom he had been rearing, who were still unable to direct themselves, and were soon to lose their Protector ; but He said, “ I will not leave you comfortless orphans, I will come to you ;”^{*} meaning to say, He would come again to them in the power of His Holy Spirit, who should be their present all-sufficient Guide, though He Himself was away. And we know, from the sacred history, that when the Holy Spirit came, they ceased to be the defenceless children they had been before. He breathed into them a divine life, and gifted them with spiritual manhood, or *perfection*, as it is called in Scripture. From that time forth, they put away childish things ; they spake, they understood, they thought, as those who had been taught to govern themselves ; and who, having “ an unction from the Holy One, knew all things.”

That such a change was wrought in the Apostles, according to Christ's promise, is evident from comparing their conduct *before* the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on them, and *after*. I need not enlarge on their wonderful firmness and zeal in their Master's cause afterwards. On the other hand it is plain from the Gospels, that before the Holy Ghost came down, that is, while Christ was still with them, they were as helpless and ignorant as children ; had no clear notion what they ought to seek after, and how, and were carried astray by their accidental feelings and their long-cherished prejudices. What was it but to act the child, to ask how many times a fellow-Christian should offend against us, and we forgive him, as St. Peter did ? or to ask to see the Father, with St. Philip ? or to propose to

^{*} John xiv. 18.

build tabernacles on the mount, as if they were not to return to the troubles of the world? or to dispute who should be the greatest?"* or to look for Christ's restoring at that time the temporal kingdom to Israel!† Natural as such views were in the case of half-instructed Jews, they were evidently unworthy those whom Christ had made His, that He might "present them perfect" before the throne of God.

Yet the first disciples of Christ at least put off their vanities once for all, when the Spirit came upon them; but as to ourselves, the Spirit has long since been poured upon us, even from our earliest years; yet it is a serious question, whether multitudes of us, even of those among us who make a profession of religion, are even so far advanced in a knowledge of the Truth as the Apostles were before the day of Pentecost. It may be a profitable employment to-day to consider this question, as suggested by the text,—to inquire how far we have proceeded in putting off such childish things as are inconsistent with a manly honest profession of the Gospel.

Now, observe, I am not inquiring whether we are plainly living in sin, in wilful disobedience; nor even whether we are yielding through thoughtlessness to sinful practices and habits. The condition of those who act against their conscience, or who act without conscience, that is, lightly and carelessly, is far indeed from bearing any resemblance to that of the Apostles in the years of their early discipleship. I am supposing you, my brethren, to be on the whole followers of Christ, to profess to obey Him; and I address you as those who seem to themselves to have a fair hope of salvation. I am directing your attention, not to your sins, not to those faults and failings which you know to be such, and are trying to conquer, as being confessedly evil in themselves, but to such of your views, wishes, and tastes, as resemble those which the Apostles cherished, true believers as they were, before they attained their manhood in the Gospel: and I ask, how far you have dismissed these from your minds as vain and trifling; that is, how far you have made what St. Paul in the text seems to consider the first step in the true spiritual course of a Christian, on whom the Holy Ghost has descended.

1. For example, Let us consider our love of the pleasures of life. I am willing to allow there is an innocent love of the world, innocent in itself. God made the world, and has sanctioned the general form of human society, and has given us abundant pleasures in it; I do not say *lasting* pleasures, but still, while they last, really pleasures. It is natural that the young should look with hope to the prospect before

* Matt. xvii. 4; xviii. 21; xx. 20. John xiv. 8.

† Acts i. 6

them. They cannot help forming schemes what they will do when they come into active life, or what they should wish to be had they their choice. They indulge themselves in fancyings about the future, which they know at the time cannot come true. At other times they confine themselves to what is possible; and then their hearts burn, while they dream of quiet happiness, domestic comfort, independence. Or, with bolder views, they push forward their fortunes into public life, and indulge ambitious hopes. They fancy themselves rising in the world, distinguished, courted, admired; securing influence over others, and rewarded with high station. James and John had such a dream when they besought Christ that they might sit at His side in the most honourable places in His kingdom.

Now such dreams can hardly be called sinful in themselves, and without reference to the particular case; for the gifts of wealth, power, and influence, and much more of domestic comfort, come from God, and may be religiously improved. But, though not directly censurable, they are *childish*; childish either in themselves, or at least when cherished and indulged; childish in a Christian, who has infinitely higher views to engross his mind; and, as being childish, excusable only in the young. They *are* an offence when retained as life goes on; but in the young we may regard them after the pattern of our Saviour's judgment upon the young man who was rich and noble. He is said to have "loved him;" pitying (that is) and not harshly denouncing the anticipations which he had formed of happiness from wealth and power, yet withal not concealing from him the sacrifice of all these which he must make, "if he would be perfect," that is, a man, and not a mere child in the Gospel.

2. But there are other childish views and habits besides, which must be put off, while we take on ourselves the full profession of a Christian; and these, not so free from intrinsic guilt as those which have been already noticed;—such as the love of display, greediness of the world's praise, and the love of the comforts and luxuries of life. These, though wrong tempers of mind, still I do not now call by their hardest names, because I would lead persons, if I could, rather to turn away from them as unworthy a Christian, with a sort of contempt, out-growing them as they grow in grace, and laying them aside as a matter of course, while they are gradually learning to "set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth."

Children have evil tempers and idle ways which we do not deign to speak seriously of. Not that we, in any degree, approve them or endure them on their own account; nay, we punish some of them; but we bear them in children, and look for their disappearing as the mind

becomes more mature. And so in religious matters there are many habits and views, which we bear with in the unformed Christian, but which we account disgraceful and contemptible should they survive that time when a man's character may be supposed to be settled. Love of display is one of these ; whether we are vain of our abilities, or our acquirements, or our wealth, or our personal appearance ; whether we discover our weakness in talking much, or love of managing, or again in love of dress. Vanity, indeed, and conceit are always disagreeable, for the reason that they interfere with the comfort of other persons, and vex them ; but I am here observing, that they are *in themselves* odious, when discerned in those who enjoy the full privileges of the Church, and are by profession men in Christ Jesus, odious from their inconsistency with Christian faith and earnestness.

And so with respect to the love of worldly comforts and luxuries, (which, unhappily, often grows upon us rather than disappears from our character,) whether or not it be natural in youth, at least, it is (if I may so say) *shocking* in those who profess to be "perfect," if we would estimate things aright ; and this from its great incongruity with the spirit of the Gospel. Is it not something beyond measure strange and monstrous, (if we could train our hearts to possess a right judgment in all things,) to profess that our treasure is not here, but in heaven with Him who is ascended thither, and to own that we have a cross to bear after Him, who first suffered before He triumphed ; and yet to set ourselves *deliberately* to study our own comfort as some great and sufficient end, to go much out of our way to promote it, to sacrifice any thing considerable to guard it, and to be downcast at the prospect of the loss of it ? Is it possible for a true son of the Church militant, while "the ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents," and "the servants of his Lord are encamped in the open field," to "eat and drink" securely, to wrap himself in the furniture of wealth, to feed his eyes with "the pride of life," and complete for himself the measure of this world's elegances ?

Again, all timidity, irresolution, fear of ridicule, weakness of purpose, such as the Apostles showed when they deserted Christ, and Peter especially when he denied Him, are to be numbered among the tempers of mind which are childish as well as sinful ; which we must learn to despise,—to be ashamed at ourselves if we are influenced by them, and, instead of thinking the conquest of them a great thing, to account it as one of the very first steps towards being but an ordinary true believer ; just as the Apostles, in spite of their former discipleship, only commenced (surely) their Christian course at the day of Pentecost, and then took to themselves a good measure of faith, boldness, zeal,

and self-mastery, not as some great proficiency and as a boast, but as the very condition of their being Christians at all, as the elements of spiritual life, as a mere outfitting, and a small attainment indeed in that extended course of sanctification through which the Blessed Spirit is willing to lead every Christian.

Now in this last remark I have given a chief reason for dwelling on the subject before us. It is very common for Christians to make much of what are but petty services ; first to place the very substance of religious obedience in a few meagre observances, or particular moral precepts which are easily complied with, and which they think fit to call giving up the world ; and then to make a great vaunting, about their having done what, in truth, every one who is not a mere child in Christ ought to be able to do, to congratulate themselves upon their success, ostentatiously to return thanks for it, to condemn others who do not happen to move exactly along the very same line of minute practices in detail which they have adopted, and in consequence to forget that, after all, by such poor obedience, right though it be, still they have not approached even to a distant view of that point in their Christian course, at which they may consider themselves, in St. Paul's words, to have "attained" a sure hope of salvation ;—just as little children, when they first have strength to move their limbs, triumph in every exertion of their newly-acquired power, as in some great victory. To put off idle hopes of earthly good, to be sick of flattery and the world's praise, to see the emptiness of temporal greatness, and to be watchful against self-indulgence ; these are but the beginnings of religion, these are but the preparation of heart, which religious earnestness implies ; without a good share of them, how can a Christian move a step ? How could Abraham, when called of God, have even set out from his native place, unless he had left off to think much of this world, and cared not for its ridicule ? Surely these attainments are but our first manly robe, showing that childhood is gone ; and, if we feel the love and fear of the world still active within our hearts, deeply must we be humbled, yes, and alarmed ; and humbled even though but the traces remain of former weaknesses. But even if otherwise, what thank have we ? See what the Apostles were, by way of contrast, and then you will see what is the true life of the Spirit, the substance and full fruit of holiness. To love our brethren with a resolution which no obstacles can overcome, so as almost to consent to an anathema on ourselves, if so be we may save those who hate us,—to labour in God's cause against hope, and in the midst of sufferings,—to read the events of life, as they occur, by the interpretation which Scripture gives them, and that, not as if the language were strange to us, but to do it promptly,—to perform all our

relative daily duties most watchfully,—to check every evil thought, and bring the whole mind into captivity to the law of Christ,—to be patient, cheerful, forgiving, meek, honest, and true,—to persevere in this good work till death, making fresh and fresh advances towards perfection,—and after all, even to the end, to confess ourselves unprofitable servants, nay, to feel ourselves corrupt and sinful creatures, who (with all our proficiency) would still be lost unless God bestow on us His mercy in Christ;—these are some of the difficult realities of religious obedience, which we must pursue, and which the Apostles in high measure attained, and which, we may well bless God's holy name, if He enables us to make our own.

Let us then take it for granted, as a truth which cannot be gainsaid, that to break with the world, and make religion our first concern, is, only to cease to be children; and, again, that in consequence, those Christians who have come to mature years, and yet do not even so much as this, are “in the presence of the Angels of God,” an odious and unnatural spectacle, a mockery of Christianity. I do not say what such men are in God's sight, and what are their prospects for the next world; for that is a fearful thought,—and we ought to be influenced by motives far higher than that mere slavish dread of future punishment to which such a consideration would lead us.

But here some one may ask, whether I am not speaking severely in urging so many sacrifices at the beginning of true Christian obedience. In conclusion, then, I observe, in the first place, that I have not said a word against the moderate and thankful enjoyment of this life's goods, *when* they actually come in our way; but against the wishing earnestly for them, seeking them, and preferring them to God's righteousness, which is commonly done. Further, I am not excluding from the company of Christians all who cannot at once make up *their* minds thus vigorously to regret the world, when its goods are dangerous, inexpedient, or unsuitable; but excluding them from the company of mature manly Christians. Doubtless our Lord deals gently with us. He has put his two Sacraments apart from each other. Baptism first admits us to His favour; His Holy Supper brings us among His perfect ones. He has put from fourteen to twenty years between them, that we may have time to count the cost, and make our decision calmly. Only there must be no standing still,—there cannot be; time goes slowly, yet surely from birth to the age of manhood, in like manner, our minds, though slowly formed to love Christ, must still be forming. It is when men are mature in years, and yet are “children in understanding,” then they are intolerable, because they have exceeded their season, and are out of place. Then it is that ambitious thoughts, trifling pursuits and

amusements, passionate wishes and keen hopes, and the love of display, are directly sinful because they are by that time deliberate sins. While they were children, "they spake as children, understood, thought as children;" but when they became men, "it was high time to awake out of sleep," and "put away childish things." And if they have continued children instead of "having their senses exercised to discriminate between the excellent and the base," alas, what deep repentance must be theirs before they know what true peace is!—what self-reproach and sharp self-discipline, before their eyes can be opened to see effectually those truths which are "spiritually discerned!"

So much on the case of those who neglect to grow betimes into the hope of their calling. As to the young themselves, it is plain that nothing I have said can give encouragement to them to acquiesce in their present incomplete devotion of themselves to God, because it will be as much as they can do, even with their best efforts, to make their growth of wisdom and of stature keep pace with each other. And if there be any one who, as thinking the enjoyments of youth must soon be relinquished, deliberately resolves to make the most of them before the duties of manhood come upon him, such a one, in doing so, is rendering it impossible for him to give them up, when he is called to do so. As for those who allow themselves in what, even in youth, is clearly sinful,—the deliberate neglect of prayer, profaneness, riotous living, or other immorality,—the case of such persons has not even entered into my mind, when I spoke of youthful thoughtlessness. They, of course, have no "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

But if there be those among us, and such there well may be, who, like the young ruler, "worshipping Christ," and "loved" by Him, and obeying His commandments from their youth up, yet cannot but be "sorrowful" at the thought of giving up their pleasant visions, their childish idolatries, and their bright hopes of earthly happiness, such I bid be of good cheer, and take courage. What is it your Saviour requires of you, more than will also be exacted from you by that hard and evil master, who desires your ruin? Christ bids you give up the world; but will not, at any rate, the world soon give up you? Can you keep it, by being its slave? Will not he, whose creature of temptation it is, the prince of the world, take it from you, whatever he at present promises? What does your Lord require of you, but to look at all things as they really are, to account them merely as His instruments, and to believe that good is good because He wills it, that he can bless as easily by hard stone as by bread, in the desert as in the fruitful field, if we have faith in Him who gives us the true bread from heaven? Daniel, and his friends were princes of the royal house of David; they were

"children well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, cunning in knowledge, and understanding science;"* yet they had faith to refuse even the literal meat and drink given them, because it was an idol's sacrifice, and God sustained them without it. For ten days of trial they lived on pulse and water; yet "at the end," says the sacred record, "their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Doubt not, then, His power to bring you through any difficulties, who gives you the command to encounter them. He has showed you the way; He gave up the home of His mother Mary to "be about His father's business," and now He but bids you take up after Him the cross which He bore for you, and "fill up what is wanting of His afflictions in your flesh." Be not afraid,—it is but a pang now and then, and a struggle; a covenant with your eyes, and a fasting in the wilderness, some calm habitual watchfulness, and the hearty effort to obey, and all will be well. Be not afraid. He is most gracious, and will bring you on by little and little. He does not show you whither He is leading you; you might be frightened did you see the whole prospect at once. Sufficient for the day is its own evil. Follow His plan; look not on anxiously; look down at your present footing "lest it be turned out of the way," but speculate not about the future: I can well believe that you have hopes now, which you cannot give up, and even which support you in your present course. Be it so; whether they will be fulfilled, or not, is in His hand. He may be pleased to grant the desires of your heart; if so, thank Him for His mercy; only be sure, that all will be for your highest good, and "as thy days, so shall thy strength be. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky. The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."† He knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning; and when we outgrow our childhood, we but approach, however feebly, to His likeness, who has no youth nor age, who has no passions, no hopes, nor fears, but who loves truth, purity, and mercy, and who is supremely blessed, because He is supremely holy.

Lastly, while we thus think of Him, let us not forget to be up and doing. Let us beware of indulging a mere barren faith and love, which dreams instead of working, and is fastidious when it should be hardy. This is only spiritual childhood in another form;—for the Holy Ghost is the Author of active good works, and leads us to the observance of all lowly deeds of ordinary obedience as the most pleasing sacrifice to God.

Daniel i. 4.

† Deut. xxxiii. 25—27.



PAROCHIAL SERMONS.

VOL. II.

OF THE LONDON EDITION.

FOR THE FESTIVALS OF THE CHURCH.

"Well to celebrate these Religious and Sacred Days, is to spend the flower of our time happily. They are the splendour and outward dignity of our religion, forcible witnesses of ancient Truth, provocations to the exercises of all piety, shadows of our endless felicity in heaven, on earth everlasting records and memorials; wherein they which cannot be drawn to hearken unto that we teach, may, only by looking upon that we do in a manner read whatsoever we believe."—
HOOKER, ECCLES. POL. v. 71.

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME explanation may be necessary by way of introducing the Reader to the Sermons contained in this Volume. It has been the writer's practice upon Festivals, in the course of the Morning Service appointed for each, to read a short Lecture upon a subject connected with the day. When he applied himself to prepare these Lectures for the press, he found that some of them required re-writing, and others enlarging; while those which belonged to the Sunday Festivals necessarily varied in length and style from such as had been read on Week-days. The consequence has been, that what was originally a series abrupt and incomplete in point of composition, is now wanting also in uniformity of character, without, in many cases, becoming exempt from its first defect. Moreover, the circumstances under which the Lectures were written, have occasioned, in some places, a particularity of remark, which could hardly have been ventured on in a large and mixed congregation, and elsewhere a line of thought more abstruse or argumentative than is commonly advisable in Parochial teaching.

This is said, only as an apology for the particular form and cast of the Volume. As for the matter itself, did the writer ask any indulgence for it, he would incur the inconsistency of implying that it ought not to have been given to the world. Yet he may be allowed to entreat, in respect both of this and of his former Volume, that if there are persons who at first reading feel apprehensive that some of his statements are of hurtful tendency, they would deal more fairly with themselves than to begin with a critical, instead of a practical consideration of them; and, that, before they allow themselves to fear for others, they would consider whether the statements in question have had any bad effect on their own minds. This he says, not as forgetful that the true standard and test of religious teaching are, not its apparent effects one way or

the other, but the rule of Scripture and Antiquity ; but, anticipating that objections will be brought rather from the supposed consequences of his doctrine, than its want of authority, he is desirous that these consequences should be fairly proved before they are imputed. On the other hand, should any reader be led to suppose that any thing has been said by way of paradox or for novelty's sake, let him first of all inquire, whether the points objected to do not rather form part of a whole,—of one integral view of doctrine, which has ever been considered to descend in an unbroken line from the first ages of the Gospel, and which, far from being the mere food of idle and ingenious intellects, has before now influenced Christians to suffer and to lose their all in maintenance of it.

He ventures further to hope, that he may not unnecessarily be supposed, in any part of his Volumes, to be hazarding remarks on opinions or practices existing within the Church. There are for the most part objects enough external to it, which answer to them, and far more legitimately ; and if there is sufficient reason for noticing the mistakes in question, on account of the existing insensibility of Society to the real moral differences between the Sectarian and the High Apostolical temper, he conceives that they should not find a shelter in the mere accident, that they are not altogether without advocates among ourselves.

In conclusion, he must express his great obligations, in the matter of these Volumes, to the unconscious assistance of a Friend, with whom he is in habits of familiarity, and whose stray observations he has pleasure in detecting in them. He makes this acknowledgment in case any coincidences of remark should be hereafter traceable between them and any future publication of the Author of the *Christian Year*.

SERMON I.

THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE.

THE WORLD'S BENEFACTORS.

JOHN i. 40.

One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

WITH this Festival we begin our year,—thus ushering in, with a few weeks of preparation, the day of Christ's Nativity. St. Andrew, whom we now commemorate, has been placed first of the Apostles, because (as far as Scripture informs us) he was the first among them who found the Messiah, and sought to be His disciple. The circumstances which preceded his call are related in the passage of the Gospel from which the text is taken. We are there informed that it was John the Baptist who pointed out to him his Saviour. It was fitting that the forerunner of Christ should be the instrument of leading to Him the first-fruits of his Apostles.

St. Andrew, who was already one of St. John's disciples, was attending on his master with another, when, as it happened, Jesus passed by. The Baptist, who had from the first declared his own subordinate place in the dispensation which was then opening, took this occasion of pointing out to his two disciples Him in whom it centered. He said, "Behold the Lamb of God; this is He of whom I spake, whom the Father has chosen and sent, the true sacrificial Lamb, by whose suffering the sins of the world will be expiated." On hearing this, the two disciples (Andrew, I say, being one of them) straightway left John and followed Christ. He turned round and asked them, "What seek ye?" They expressed their desire to be allowed to wait upon his teaching; and He suffered them to accompany Him home, and to pass that day with Him. What He said to them is not told us; but St. Andrew received such confirmation of the truth of the Baptist's words, that in consequence he went after his own brother to tell him what he had found. "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah . . . and he brought him to Jesus."

St. John the Evangelist, who has been guided to preserve various notices concerning the separate Apostles, which are not contained in the three first Gospels, speaks of Andrew in two other places, and introduces him under circumstances which show that, little as is known of this Apostle now, he was, in fact, very high in the favour and confidence of his Lord. In his twelfth chapter he describes Andrew as bringing to Christ certain Greeks who came up to Jerusalem to worship, and who were desirous of seeing Him. And, what is remarkable, these strangers had first applied to St. Philip, who, though an Apostle himself, instead of taking upon him to introduce them, had recourse to his fellow-townsmen, St. Andrew, as if, whether from age or intimacy with Christ, a more suitable channel for furthering their petition. ‘ Philip cometh, and telleth Andrew ; and again, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.’

These two Apostles are also mentioned together in the sixth chapter of the same Gospel, at the consultation which preceded the miracle of the loaves and fishes ; and there again Andrew is engaged, as before, in the office of introducing strangers to Christ. “ There is a lad here,” he says to his Lord, a lad who, perhaps, had not courage to come forward of himself, “ which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes.”

The information afforded by these passages, of St. Andrew’s especial acceptableness to Christ among the Apostles, is confirmed by the only place in the other Gospels, besides the catalogue, in which his name occurs. After our Lord had predicted the ruin of the Temple, “ Peter, James, John, and *Andrew* asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be ?”* and it was to these four that our Saviour revealed the signs of His coming, and of the end of the world. Here St. Andrew is represented as in the especial confidence of Christ ; and associated too with those Apostles whom He is known to have selected from the Twelve, on various occasions, by tokens of his peculiar favour.

Little is known of St. Andrew in addition to these inspired notices of him. He is said to have preached the Gospel in Scythia ; and he was at length martyred in Achaia. His death was by crucifixion ; that kind of cross being used, according to the tradition, which still goes by his name.

Yet, little as Scripture tells us concerning him, it affords us enough for a lesson, and that an important one. These are the facts before us. St. Andrew was the first convert among the Apostles ; he was especially in our Lord’s confidence ; thrice is he described as introducing others to Him : lastly, he is little known in history, while the place of

* Mark. xiii. 3.

dignity and the name of highest renown have been allotted to his brother Simon, whom he was the means of bringing to the knowledge of his Saviour.

Our lesson, then, is this : that those men are not necessarily the most useful men in their generation, nor the most favoured by God, who make the most noise in the world, and who seem to be principals in the great changes and events recorded in history ; on the contrary, that even when we are able to point to a certain number of men as the real instruments of any great blessings vouchsafed to mankind, our relative estimate of them, one with another, is often very erroneous : so that, on the whole, if we would trace truly the hand of God in human affairs, and pursue His bounty as displayed in the world to its original sources, we must unlearn our admiration of the powerful and distinguished, our reliance on the opinion of society, our respect for the decisions of the learned or the multitude, and turn our eyes to private life, watching in all we read or witness for the true signs of God's presence, the graces of personal holiness manifested in His elect ; which, weak as they may seem to mankind, are mighty through God, and have an influence upon the course of His Providence, and bring about great events in the world at large, when the wisdom and strength of the natural man are of no avail.

Now, first, observe the operation of this law of God's government, in respect to the introduction of those temporal blessings which are of the first importance in securing our well-being and comfort in the present life. For example, who was the first cultivator of corn ? who first tamed and domesticated the animals whose strength we use, and whom we make our food ? Or who first discovered the medicinal herbs which, from the earliest times, have been our resource against disease ? If it was mortal man, who thus looked through the vegetable and animal worlds, and discriminated between the useful and the worthless, his name is unknown to the millions whom he has benefitted. It is notorious, that those who first suggest the most happy inventions, and open a way to the secret stores of nature,—those who weary themselves in the search after Truth, strike out momentous principles of action, painfully force upon their contemporaries the adoption of beneficial measures, or, again, are the original cause of the chief events in national history, are commonly supplanted, as regards celebrity and reward, by inferior men. Their works are not called after them : nor the arts and systems which they have given the world. Their schools are usurped by strangers, and their maxims of wisdom circulate among the children of their people, forming, perhaps, a nation's character, but not embalming in their own immortality the names of their original authors.

Such is the history of the social and political world ; and the rule discernible in it is still more clearly established in the world of morals and religion. Who taught the Doctors and Saints of the Church, who, in their day, or in after times, have been the most illustrious expounders of the precepts of right and wrong, and, by word and deed, are the guides of our conduct ? Did Almighty Wisdom speak to them through the operation of their own minds, or rather, did it not subject them to instructors unknown to fame, wiser perhaps even than themselves. Andrew followed John the Baptist, while Simon remained at his nets. Andrew first recognised the Messiah among the inhabitants of despised Nazareth ; and he brought his brother to Him. Yet to Andrew Christ spake no word of commendation, which has been allowed to continue on record ; whereas to Simon, even on his first coming, He gave the honourable name by which he is now designated, and afterwards put him forward as the typical foundation of His Church. Nothing indeed can hence be inferred, one way or the other, concerning the relative excellence of the two brothers ; so far only appears, that, in the providential course of events, the one was the secret beginner, and the other the public instrument of a great divine work. St. Paul, again, was honoured with the distinction of a miraculous conversion, and was called to be the chief agent of the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen ; yet to Ananias, an otherwise unknown saint, dwelling at Damascus, was committed the high office of conveying the gifts of pardon and the Holy Ghost to the Apostle of the Gentiles.

Providence thus acts daily. The early life of all men is private ; it is as children, generally, that their characters are formed to good or evil : and those who form them to good, their truest and chief benefactors, are unknown to the world. It has been remarked, that some of the most eminent Christians have been blessed with religious mothers, and have in after life referred their own graces to the instrumentality of their teaching. Augustine has preserved to the Church the history of his mother Monica ; but in the case of others, even the name is denied to us of our great benefactress, whosoever she was,—and sometimes, doubtless, the circumstance of her service altogether.

When we look at the history of inspiration, the same rule still holds. Consider the Old Testament, which “makes us wise unto salvation.” How great a part of it is written by authors unknown ! The book of Judges, the Second of Samuel, the books of Kings, Chronicles, Esther, and Job, and great part of the book of Psalms. The last instance is the most remarkable of these. “Profitable” beyond words as is the instruction conveyed to us in every page of Scripture, yet the Psalms have been the most directly and visibly useful part of the whole volume,

having been the prayer-book of the Church ever since they were written ; and have done more, (as far as we dare judge,) to prepare souls for heaven, than any of the inspired books, except the Gospels. Yet, the authors of a large portion of them are altogether unknown. And so with the Liturgies, which have been the possession of the Christian Church from the beginning ; who were those matured and exalted Saints who left them to us ? Nay, in the whole system of our worship, who are the authors of each decorous provision and each edifying custom ? Who found out the musical tunes, in which our praises are offered up to God, and in which resides so wondrous a persuasion "to worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker ?" Who were those religious men, our spiritual fathers in the "Catholic faith," who raised of old time the excellent fabrics all over the country, in which we worship, though with less of grateful reverence for their memory than we might piously express ? Of these greatest men in every age, there "is no memorial : " they "are perished as though they had never been, and become as though they had never been born."

Now I know that reflections of this kind are apt to sadden and vex us ; and such of us particularly as are gifted with ardent and enthusiastic minds, with a generous love of what is great and good, and a noble hatred of injustice. These men find it difficult to reconcile themselves to the notion that the triumph of the Truth in all its forms, is postponed to the next world. They would fain anticipate the coming of the righteous Judge ; nay, perhaps they are somewhat too favourably disposed towards the present world, to acquiesce without resistance in a doctrine which testifies to the corruption of its decisions, and the worthlessness of its honours. But that it is a truth, has already been showed almost as matter of fact, putting the evidence of Scripture out of consideration ; and if it be such, it is our wisdom, as it will become our privilege, to accustom our minds to it, and to receive it, not in word merely, but in seriousness.

Why indeed should we shrink from this gracious law of God's present providence in our own case, or in the case of those we love, when our subjection to it does but associate us with the best and noblest of our race, and with beings of nature and condition superior to our own ? Andrew is scarcely known, except by name ; while Peter has ever held the place of honour all over the Church ; yet Andrew brought Peter to Christ. And are not the Blessed Angels unknown to the world ? and is not God Himself, the Author of all good, hid from mankind at large, partially manifested and poorly glorified, in a few scattered servants here and there ? and His Spirit, do we know whence It cometh, and whither It goeth ? and though He has taught men whatever there has

been of wisdom among them from the beginning, yet when He came on earth in visible form, even then it was said of Him, "The world knew Him not." His marvellous providence works beneath a veil, which speaks but an untrue language; and to see Him who is the Truth and the Life, we must stoop underneath it, and so in our turn hide ourselves from the world. They who present themselves at kings' courts, pass on to the inner chambers, where the gaze of the rude multitude cannot pierce; and we, if we would see the King of kings in His glory, must be content to disappear from the things that are seen. Hid are the saints of God; if they are known to men, it is accidentally, in their temporal offices, as holding some high earthly station, or effecting some mere civil work, not as saints. St. Peter has a place in history, far more as a chief instrument of a strange revolution in human affairs, than in his true character, as a self-denying follower of his Lord, to whom truths were revealed which flesh and blood could not discern.

How poor-spirited are we, and what dishonour we put upon the capabilities and the true excellence of our nature, when we subject it to the judgment and disposal of all its baser specimens, to the rude and ignorant praise, and poor recompensing of carnal and transgressing man! How shall the flesh be at all a judge of the spirit? or the sinner of God's elect? Are we to look downwards, not upwards? Shall we basely acknowledge the right of the Many who tread the broad way, to be the judge of holiness, which comes from God, and appeals to Him? And does not the eye of faith discern witnesses of our conduct, ever present, and far worthier of our respect, than even a world of the ungodly? Is man the noblest being in the creation? Surely we, as well as our Divine Lord, are "seen of Angels;" nay, and ministered unto by them, much as they excel us in strength! St. Paul plainly tells us, that it is God's purpose that "His manifold wisdom should be known to the heavenly principalities and powers, through the Church."* When we are made Christians, we are baptized "into that within the veil," we are brought near to an innumerable company of Angels; and resembling them in their hidden condition, share their sympathy and their services. Therefore, the same Apostle exhorts Timothy to persevere in obedience, not only by the thought of God, but by that of the Angels; and surely we ought to cultivate the habitual feeling, that they see us in our most private deeds, and most carefully guarded solitudes.

It is more than enough for a sinful mortal to be made a fellow-worker and fellow-worshipper with the Blessed Spirits, and the servant and the son of God Most High. Rather let us try to realize our privilege, and

* Eph. iii. 10.

withal humble ourselves at our want of faith. We are the elect of God, and have entrance "through the gates into the" heavenly "City," while we "do His commandments,"* following Christ as Andrew did, when pointed out to us by His preachers and ministers. To those who thus "follow on to know Him, He manifests Himself, while He is hid from the world. They are near Him, as His confidential servants, and are the real agents in the various providences which occur in the history of nations, though overlooked by their annalists and sages. They bring before Him the temporal wants of men, witnessing His marvellous doings with the barley loaves and fishes; they, too, lead strangers before Him for His favourable notice, and for His teaching. And, when He brings trouble and distress upon a sinful people, they have truest knowledge of His will and can best interpret His works; for they had lived in contemplation and prayer, and while others praise the goodly stones and buildings of the external Temple, have heard from Him in secret, how the end shall be. Thus they live; and when they die, the world knows nothing of its loss, and soon lets slip what it might have retained of their history; but the Church of Christ does what she can, gathering together their relics, and honouring their name, even when their works cannot be found. But those works have followed them; and, at the appearing of their Lord in judgment, will be at length displayed before all the world, and for His merits eternally rewarded in His heavenly kingdom.

SERMON II.

THE FEAST OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE.

FAITH WITHOUT SIGHT.

JOHN XX. 29.

Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

ST. THOMAS is the Apostle who doubted of our Lord's resurrection. This want of faith has given him a sort of character in the minds of most people, which is referred to in the Collect for the day. Yet we must not suppose that he differed greatly from the other Apostles. They

* Rev. xxii. 14.

all, more or less, mistrusted Christ's promises when they saw Him led away to be crucified. When He was buried, their hopes were buried with Him; and when the news was brought them, that He was risen again, they all disbelieved it. On His appearing to them, He "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart."* But, as St. Thomas was not present at this time, and only heard from his fellow Apostles that they had seen the Lord, his time of perplexity and darkness lasted longer than theirs. At the news of this great miracle, he expressed his determination not to believe unless he himself saw Christ, and was allowed to touch Him. And thus by an apparently accidental circumstance, Thomas is singled out from his brethren, who at first disbelieved as well as he, as if an especial instance of unbelief. None of them believed till they saw Christ, except St. John, and he too hesitated at first. Thomas was convinced latest, because he saw Christ latest. On the other hand, it is certain that, though he disbelieved the good news of Christ's resurrection at first, he was no cold-hearted follower of his Lord, as appears from his conduct on a previous occasion, when he expressed a desire to share danger, and to suffer with Him. When Christ was setting out for Judæa to raise Lazarus from the dead, the disciples said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?"† When He remained in His intention, Thomas said to the rest, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." This journey ended, as His Apostles had foreboded, in their Lord's death; they indeed escaped, but it was at the instance of Thomas that they hazarded their lives with Him.

St. Thomas then loved his Master, as became an Apostle, and was devoted to His service; but when he saw Him crucified, his faith failed for a season with that of the rest. At the same time we need not deny that his especial doubts of Christ's resurrection were not altogether owing to circumstances, but in a measure arose from some faulty state of mind. St. John's narrative itself, and our Saviour's speech to him, convey an impression that he was more to blame than the rest. His standing out alone, not against one witness only, but against his ten fellow-disciples, besides Mary Magdalene and the other women, is evidence of this; and his very strong words, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."‡ And it is observable, that little as we know of St. Thomas, yet the one remaining recorded speech of his (before Christ's crucifixion,) intimates something of the same doubting, perplexed state of mind. When Christ said

* Mark xvi. 14.

† John xi. 8.

‡ John xx. 25..

He was going to His Father, and by a way which they all knew, Thomas interposed with an argument: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?"* that is, we do not see heaven, or the God of heaven, how can we know the way thither? He seems to have required some sensible insight into the unseen state, some infallible sign from heaven, a ladder of Angels like Jacob's, which would remove anxiety by showing him the end of the journey at the time he set out. Some such secret craving after certainty beset him. And a like desire rose within him on the news of Christ's resurrection. Being weak in faith, he suspended his judgment, and seemed resolved not to believe any thing, till he was told every thing. Accordingly, when our Saviour appeared to him, eight days after his appearance to the rest, while He allowed Thomas his wish, and satisfied his senses that He was really alive, He accompanied the permission with a rebuke, and intimated that by yielding to his weakness, he was withdrawing what was a real blessedness. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."†

However, after all, we are not so much concerned with considerations respecting the natural disposition and temper of the Blessed Apostle, whom we to-day commemorate, as with the particular circumstance in which his name occurs, and with our Saviour's comment upon it. All His disciples minister to Him; and, as in other ways, so also in giving occasion for the words of grace which proceed from His mouth. They minister to Him even in their weaknesses, which are often brought to light in Scripture, not hidden as Christian friends would hide in piety, that so He may convert them into instruction and comfort for His Church. Thus Martha's over-earnestness in household duties has drawn from Him a sanction for a life of contemplation and prayer; and so, in the history before us, the over-caution of St. Thomas has gained for us His promise of especial blessing on those who believe without having seen. I proceed to make some remarks on the nature of this believing temper, and why it is blessed.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that what our Saviour says to Thomas so clearly and impressively, He has implied, in one way or other, all through His ministry; the blessedness of a mind that believes readily. His demand and trial of faith in the case of those who came

* John xiv. 5.

† 1 John xx. 27-29.

for His miraculous aid, His praise of it were found, His sorrow where it was wanting, His warnings against hardness of heart ; all are evidence of this. “ Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.” “ Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.” “ Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.” “ An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.” “ O fools; and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”* These will remind us of a multitude of similar passages in especial praise of faith. St. Paul pursues the same line of doctrine begun by his Lord. In three Epistles he sets before us the peculiar place it holds among the evidences of a religious mind ; and each time refers to a passage in the Prophets, in order to show that he was bringing in no new doctrine, but only teaching that which had been promulged from the beginning. In consequence, in our ordinary language we speak of religion being built upon faith, not upon reason : on the other hand, it is as common for those who scoff at religion to object this very doctrine against us, as if, in so saying, we had almost admitted that Christianity was not true. Let us then consider how the case stands.

Every religious mind, under every dispensation of Providence, will be in the habit of looking out of and beyond self, as regards all matters connected with its highest good. For a man of religious mind is he who attends to the rule of conscience, which is born with him, which he did not make for himself, and to which he feels bound in duty to submit. And conscience immediately directs his thoughts to some Being exterior to himself, who gave it, and who evidently is superior to him ; for a law implies a lawgiver, and a command implies a superior. Thus a man is at once thrown out of himself, by the very Voice which speaks within him ; and while he rules his heart and conduct by his inward sense of right and wrong, not by the maxims of the external world, yet that inward sense does not allow him to rest in itself, but sends him forth again from home to seek abroad for Him who has put His Word in him. He looks forth into the world to seek Him who is not of the world, to find behind the shadows and deceits of this shifting scene of time and sense, Him whose Word is eternal, and whose Presence is spiritual. He looks out of himself for that Living Word to which he may attribute what has echoed in his heart ; and being sure that it is to be found somewhere, he is predisposed to find it, and often thinks he has found it when he has not. Hence, if truth is not at hand he is apt to mistake error for truth, to consider as the presence, and especial work of God what is not so ; and thinking any thing preferable

* Matt. viii. 10 ; ix. 22. Luke vii. 50. Matt. xii. 39. Luke xxiv. 25.

* to scepticism, he becomes (what is sometimes imputed to him by way of reproach,) superstitious. This you may suppose, is the state of the better sort of persons in a heathen country. They are not vouchsafed the truer tokens of God's power and will, which we possess; so they fancy where they cannot find, and having consciences more acute than their reasoning powers, they pervert and misuse even those indications of God which are provided for them in nature. This is one cause of the false divinities of pagan worship, which are tokens of guilt in the worshipper, not (as we trust) when they could know no better, but when we have turned from the light, not liking "to retain God in their knowledge." And if this is the course of a religious mind, even when it is not blessed with the news of divine truth, much more will it welcome and gladly commit itself to the hand of God, when allowed to discern it in the Gospel. Such is faith as it exists in the multitude of those who believe, arising from their sense of the presence of God, originally certified to them by the inward voice of conscience.

On the other hand, such persons as prefer this world to the leadings of God's Spirit within them, soon lose their perception of the latter, and lean upon the world as a god. Having no presentiment of any Invisible Guide, who has a claim to be followed in matters of conduct, they consider nothing to have a substance but what meets their senses, are contented with this, and draw their rules of life from it. They truly are in no danger of being superstitious or credulous; for they feel no antecedent desire or persuasion that God may have made a revelation of Himself in the world; and when they hear of events supernatural, they come to the examination of them as calmly and dispassionately as if they were judges in a court of law, or inquiring into points of science. They acknowledge no especial interest in the question proposed to them; and they find it no effort to use their intellect upon it as truly, as if it were some external instrument which could not be swayed. Here then we see two opposite characters of mind, the one credulous (as it would be commonly called,) the latter candid, well-judging, and sagacious; and it is clear that the former of the two is the religious temper rather than the latter. In this way then, if in no other, faith and reason are opposed; and to believe much is more blessed than to believe little.

But this is not all. Every one who tries to do God's will, is sure to find he cannot do it perfectly. He will feel himself to be full of imperfection and sin; and the more he succeeds in regulating his heart, the more he will discern its original bitterness and guilt. Here is an additional cause of a religious man's looking out of himself. He knows the evil of his nature, and forebodes God's wrath as its consequence, and when he looks around him, he sees it reflected from within upon the

face of the world. He fears; and, in consequence, seeks about for some means of propitiating his Maker, for some token, if so be, of God's relenting. He cannot stay at home; he cannot rest in himself; he wanders about from very anxiety; he needs some one to speak peace to his soul. Should a man come to him professing to be a messenger from heaven, he is at once arrested and listens; and, whether such profession be actually true or false, yet his first desire is that it may be true. Those, on the contrary, who are without this sense of sin, can bear the first news of God's having spoken to man, without being startled. They can patiently wait till the body of evidence is brought out before them, and then receive or reject as reason may determine for them.

Further still, let us suppose two persons of strong mind, not easily excitable, sound judging and cautious; and let them be equally endowed in these respects. Now there is an additional reason why, of these two, he who is religious will believe more and reason less than the irreligious; that is, if a man's acting upon a message is the measure of his believing it, as the common sense of the world will determine. For in any matter so momentous and practical as the welfare of the soul, a wise man will not wait for the fullest evidence, before he acts; and will show his caution, not in remaining uninfluenced by the existing report of a divine message, but by obeying it though it might be more clearly attested. If it is but slightly probable that rejection of the Gospel will involve his eternal ruin, it is safest and wisest to act as if it were certain. On the other hand, when a man does not make the truth of Christianity a practical concern, but a mere matter of philosophical or historical research, he will feel himself at leisure, (and reasonably on his own grounds,) to find fault with the evidence. When we inquire into a point of history, or investigate an opinion in science, we do demand decisive evidence; we consider it allowable to wait till we obtain it, to remain undecided, in a word to be *sceptical*. If religion be not a practical matter, it is right and philosophical in us to be sceptics. Assuredly higher and fuller evidence of its truth might be given us; and, after all, there are a number of deep questions concerning the laws of nature, the constitution of the human mind, and the like, which must be solved before we can feel perfectly satisfied. And those whose hearts are not "tender,"* as Scripture expresses it, that is, who have not a vivid perception of the Divine Voice within them, and of the necessity of His existence from whom it issues, do not feel Christianity as a practical matter, and let it pass accordingly. They are accustomed to say that

* 2 Kings xxii. 19.

death will soon come upon them and solve the great secret for them without their trouble, that is, they wait for sight; not understanding, or being able to be made to comprehend, that their solving this great problem without sight is the very end and business of their mortal life: according to St. Paul's decision that faith is "the substance," or the realizing, "of things hoped for," "the evidence," or the making trial of, the acting on the belief of "things not seen."* What the Apostle says of Abraham is a description of all true faith; it goes out not knowing *whither* it goes. It does not crave or bargain to see the end of the journey; it does not argue with St. Thomas, in the days of his ignorance, "we know not *whither*, and how we can know the way?" it is persuaded that it has quite enough light to walk by, far more than sinful man has a right to expect, if it sees one step in advance; and it leaves all knowledge of the country over which it is journeying, to Him who calls it on.

And this blessed temper of mind, which influences religious men in the greater matter of choosing or rejecting the Gospel, extends itself also into their reception of it in all its parts. As faith is content with but a little light to begin its journey by, and makes it much by acting upon it, so also it reads, as it were, by twilight, the message of truth in its various details. It does not stipulate that the text of Scripture should admit of rigid and laboured proofs of its doctrines; it has the practical wisdom to consider that the word of God must have mainly one and one only sense, and to try, as well as may be, to find out what that sense is, whether the evidence of it be great or little, and not to quarrel with it if it is not overpowering. It keeps steadily in view that Christ *speaks* in Scripture, and receives His words as if it *heard* them, as if some superior and friend spoke them, one whom it wished to please; not as if it were engaged upon the dead letter of a document, which admitted of rude handling, of criticism and exception. It looks off from self to Christ; and instead of seeking impatiently for some personal assurance, is set on obedience, saying, "Here am I, send me." And in like manner towards every institution of Christ, His Church, His Sacraments, and His Ministers, it acts not as a disputer of this world, but as the disciple of Him who appointed them. Lastly, it rests contented with the revelation made it; it has "found the Messiah," and that is enough. The very principle of its former restlessness now keeps it from wandering. When "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know the true God," wavering, fearfulness, superstitious trust in the creature, pursuit of novelties, are signs, not of faith, but of unbelief.†

* Heb. xi. 1.

† Vide Cant. iii. 1-4.

Much might be added in conclusion by way of applying what has been said to the temper of our own day, in which men around us are apt almost to make it a boast that "theirs is a rational religion." Doubtless, this happens to be the case; but it is no necessary mark of a true religion that it is rational in the common sense of the word; nor is it any credit to a man to have resolved only to take up with what he considers rational. The true religion is partly altogether above reason, as in its Mysteries; and so again, it might have been introduced into the world without that array of Evidences, as they are called, which our reason is able and delights to draw out; yet it would not on that account have been less true. As far as it is above reason, as far as it has extended into any countries without sufficient proof of its divinity, so far it cannot be called rational. Indeed, that it is at all level to the reason, is rather a privilege granted by Almighty God, than a point which may be insisted on by man; and unless received as an unmerited boon, may become hurtful to us. If this remark be in any measure true, we know what to think of arguing against the doctrines of the Gospel on the ground of their being irrational, or of attempting to refute the creed of others by ridiculing articles of it as unaccountable and absurd, or of thinking that the superstitious have advanced a step towards the truth when they have plunged into infidelity, or of accounting it wrong to educate children in the Catholic faith, lest they should not have the opportunity of choosing for themselves in maturer years. Dismissing such thoughts from the mind, let us rather be content with the words of the Apostle. "The preaching of the cross," he says, "is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nought the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."*

† 1 Cor. i. 18—21.

SERMON III.

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD.

THE INCARNATION.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

THUS does the favoured Apostle and Evangelist announce to us that Sacred Mystery, which we this day especially commemorate, the incarnation of the Eternal Word. Thus briefly and simply does he speak, as if fearing he should fail in fitting reverence. If any there was who might seem to have permission to indulge in words on this subject, it was the beloved disciple, who had heard, and seen, and looked upon, and handled the Word of Life; yet, in proportion to the height of his privilege, was his discernment of the infinite distance between him and his Creator. Such too was the temper of the Holy Angels, when the Father “brought in the First-begotten into the world :”* they straightway worshipped Him. And such was the feeling of awe and love mingled together, which remained for a while in the Church after Angels had announced His coming, and Evangelists had recorded His sojourn here and His departure; “there was silence as it were for half an hour.”† Around the Church, indeed, the voices of blasphemy were heard, even as when He hung on the cross; but in the Church there was light and peace, fear, joy, and holy meditation. Lawless doubts, importunate inquiries, confident reasonings were not. A heartfelt adoration, a practical devotion to the Ever-blessed Son, precluded difficulties in faith, and sheltered the Church from the necessity of speaking.

He who had seen the Lord Jesus with a pure mind, attending him from the lake of Gennesareth to Calvary, and from the Sepulchre to Mount Olivet, where He left this scene of His humiliation; he who had been put in charge with His Virgin Mother, and heard from her what she alone could tell of the Mystery to which she had ministered:

* Heb. i. 6.

† Rev. viii. 1.

and they who had heard it from his mouth, and those again whom these have taught, the first generations of the Church needed no explicit declarations concerning His Sacred Person. Sight and hearing superseded the multitude of words; faith dispensed with the aid of lengthened Creeds and Confessions. There was silence. "The Word was made flesh;" "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord;" sentences such as these conveyed every thing, yet were officious in nothing. But when the light of His advent faded, and love waxed cold, then there was an opening for objection and discussion, and a difficulty in answering. Then misconceptions had to be explained, doubts allayed, questions set at rest, innovators silenced. Christians were forced to speak against their will, lest heretics should speak instead of them.

Such is the difference between our own state and that of the early Church, which the present Festival especially brings to mind. In the New Testament we find the doctrine of the Incarnation announced, clearly indeed, but with a reverent brevity. "The Word was made flesh." "God was manifest in the flesh." "God was in Christ." "Unto us a child is born, the mighty God." "Christ, over all, God, blessed for ever." "My Lord and my God." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Almighty." "The Son of God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person."* But we are obliged to speak more at length in the Creeds and in our teaching, to meet the perverse ingenuity of those who, when the Apostles were removed, could with impunity insult and misinterpret the letter of their writings.

Nay, further, so circumstanced are we, as to be obliged not only thus to guard the Truth, but even to give the reason of our guarding it. For they who would steal away the Lord from us, not content with forcing us to measures of protection, even go on to bring us to account for adopting them: and demand that we should put aside whatever stands between them and their heretical purposes. Therefore it is necessary to state clearly, as I have already done, why the Church has lengthened her statements of Christian doctrine. Another reason of these statements is as follows: time having proceeded, and the true traditions of our Lord's ministry being lost to us, the Object of our faith is but faintly reflected on our minds, compared with the vivid picture which His presence impressed upon the early Christians. True is it the Gospels will do very much by way of realizing for us the incarnation of the Son of God, if studied in faith and love. But the

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Cor. v. 19. Isai. ix. 6. Rom. ix. 5. John xx. 28. Rev. i. 8. Heb. i. 2, 3.

Creeds are an additional help this way. The declarations made in them, the distinctions, cautions, and the like, supported and illuminated by Scripture, draw down, as it were, from heaven, the image of Him who is on God's right hand, preserve us from an indolent use of words without apprehending them, and rouse in us those mingled feelings of fear and confidence, affection and devotion towards Him, which are implied in the belief of a personal advent of God in our nature, and which were originally derived to the Church from the very sight of Him.

And we may say further still, these statements, such, for instance, as occur in the Te Deum and Athanasian Creed, are especially suitable in divine worship, inasmuch as they kindle and elevate the religious affections. They are hymns of praise and thanksgiving; they give glory to God as revealed in the Gospel, just as David's Psalms magnify His Attributes as displayed in nature, His wonderful works in the creation of the world, and His mercies towards the house of Israel.

With these objects, then, it may be useful, on to-day's Festival, to call your attention to the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation.

The Word was from the beginning, the only begotten Son of God. Before all worlds were created, while as yet time was not, He was in existence, in the bosom of the Eternal Father, God from God, and Light from Light, supremely blessed in knowing and being known of Him, and receiving all divine perfections from Him, yet ever One with Him who begat Him. As it is said in the opening of the Gospel; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." If we may dare conjecture, He is called the Word of God, as mediating between the Father and all creatures; bringing them into being, fashioning them, giving the world its laws, imparting reason and conscience to creatures of a higher order, and revealing to them in due season the knowledge of God's will. And to us Christians He is especially the Word in that great Mystery commemorated to-day, whereby He became flesh, and redeemed us from a world of sin.

He, indeed, when man fell, might have remained in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. But that unsearchable Love, which showed itself in our original creation, rested not content with a frustrated work, but brought Him down again from His Father's bosom to do His will, and repair the evil which sin had caused. And with a wonderful condescension He came, not as before in power, but in weakness, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of that fallen creature whom He purposed to restore. So He humbled Himself; suffering all the infirmities of our nature in the likeness of sinful flesh,

all but a sinner,—pure from all sin, yet subjected to all temptation,—and at length becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

I have said that when the Only-begotten Son stooped to take upon Him our nature, He had no fellowship with sin. It was impossible that He should. Therefore, since our nature was corrupt since Adam's fall, He did not come in the way of nature, He did not clothe Himself in that corrupt flesh which Adam's race inherits. He came by miracle, so as to take on Him our imperfection without having any share in our sinfulness. He was not born as other men are; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."*

All Adam's children are children of wrath; so our Lord came as the Son of Man, but not the son of sinful Adam. He had no earthly father; He abhorred to have one. The thought may not be suffered that He should have been the son of shame and guilt. He came by a new and living way; not, indeed, formed out of the ground, as Adam was at the first, lest he should miss the participation of our nature, but selecting and purifying unto Himself a tabernacle out of that which existed. As in the beginning, woman was formed out of man by Almighty power, so now, by a like mystery, but a reverse order, the new Adam was fashioned from the woman. He was, as had been foretold, the immaculate "seed of the woman," deriving His manhood from the substance of the Virgin Mary; as it is expressed in the articles of the Creed,—“conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.”

Thus the Son of God became the Son of Man; mortal, but not a sinner; heir of our infirmities, not of our guiltiness; the offspring of the old race, yet “the beginning of the” new “creation of God.” Mary, His mother, was a sinner as others, and born of sinners; but she was set apart, “as a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,” to yield a created nature to Him who was her Creator. Thus He came into this world, not in the clouds of heaven, but born into it, born of a woman; He, the Son of Mary, and she (if it may be said), the Mother of God. Thus He came, selecting and setting apart for Himself the elements of body and soul; then, uniting them to Himself from their first origin of existence, pervading them, hallowing them by His own Divinity, spiritualizing them, and filling them with light and purity, the while they continued to be human, and for a time mortal and exposed to infirmity. And, as they grew from day to day in their holy union, His Eternal Essence still was one with them, exalting them, acting in them, manifesting Itself through them, so that He was

* John iii. 6.

truly God and Man, One Person,—as we are soul and body, yet one man, so truly God and man are not two, but One Christ. Thus did the Son of God enter this mortal world; and when He had reached man's estate, He began His ministry, preached the Gospel, chose His Apostles, suffered on the cross, died, and was buried, rose again and ascended on high, there to reign till the day when He comes again to judge the world. This is the All-gracious Mystery of the Incarnation, good to look into, good to adore; according to the saying in the text,—"the Word was made flesh,—and dwelt among us."

The brief account thus given of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, may be made more distinct by referring to some of those modes mentioned in Scripture, in which God has at divers times condescended to manifest Himself in His creatures, which come short of it.

1. God was in the Prophets, but not as He was in Christ. The divine authority, and in one sense, name, may be given to His Ministers, considered as His representatives. Moses says to the Israelites, "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." And St. Paul, "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."* In this sense, Rulers and Judges are sometimes called gods, as our Lord Himself says.

And further, the Prophets were inspired. Thus John the Baptist is said to have been filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied. In like manner the Holy Ghost came on the Apostles at Pentecost and at other times; and so wonderfully gifted was St. Paul, that "from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went of out them."† Now the characteristic of this miraculous inspiration was, that the presence of God came and went. Thus we read in the aforementioned and similar narratives, of the Prophet or Apostle being *filled* with the Spirit on a particular occasion; as again of "the Spirit of the Lord departing from Saul," and an evil spirit troubling him. Thus this divine inspiration was so far parallel to demonical possession. We find in the Gospels the devil speaking with the voice of his victim, so that the tormentor and the tormented could not be distinguished from each other. They seemed to be one and the same, though they were not; as appeared when Christ and His Apostles cast the devil out. And so again the Jewish Temple was in one sense inhabited by the presence of God, which came down upon

* Exod. xvi. 8.

1 Thess. iv. 8.

† Acts xix. 12.

it at Solomon's prayer. This was a type of our Lord's manhood dwelt in by the Word of God as a Temple; still with this essential difference, that the Jewish Temple was perishable, and again the Divine Presence might recede from it. There was no real unity between the one and the other; they were separable. But Christ says to the Jews of His own body, "Destroy this Temple and I will raise it in three days;" implying in these words, such a unity between the Godhead and the manhood, that there could be no real separation, no dissolution. Even when His body was dead, the Divine Nature was one with it; in like manner it was one with His soul in paradise. Soul and body were really one with the Eternal Word,—not one in name only,—one never to be divided. Therefore Scripture says that He rose again "according to the Spirit of holiness;" and "that it was not possible that He should be holden of death."*

2. Again, the Gospel teaches us another mode in which man may be said to be united with Almighty God. It is the peculiar blessedness of the Christian, as St. Peter tells us, to be "partaker of the Divine Nature."† We believe, and have joy in believing, that the grace of Christ renews our carnal souls, repairing the effects of Adam's fall. Where Adam brought in impurity and unbelief, the power of God infuses faith and holiness. Thus we have God's perfections communicated to us anew, and, as being under immediate heavenly influences, are said to be one with God. And further, we are assured of some real though mystical fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in order to this: so that both by a real presence in the soul, and by the fruits of grace, God is one with every believer, as in a consecrated Temple. But still, inexpressible as is this gift of Divine Mercy, it were blasphemy not to say that the in-dwelling of the Father in the Son is infinitely above this, being quite different in kind; for He is not merely of a divine nature, divine by participation of holiness and perfection, but Life and Holiness itself, such as the Father is,—the Co-eternal Son incarnate, God clothed with our nature, the Word made flesh.

3. And lastly, we read in the Patriarchal History of various appearances of Angels so remarkable that we can scarcely hesitate to suppose them to be gracious visions of the Eternal Son. For instance; it is said that "the Angel of the Lord appeared unto" Moses "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush;" yet presently this supernatural Presence is called "the Lord," and afterwards reveals His name to Moses, as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." On the other hand St. Stephen speaks of Him as "the Angel which appeared to Moses in the

* Rom. i. 4. Acts ii. 24.

† 2 Pet. i. 4.

bush." Again, he says soon after, that Moses was "in the Church in the wilderness with the Angel which spake to him in mount Sina;" yet in the book of Exodus we read, "Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain;" "God spake all these words saying;"* and the like. Now, assuming, as we seem to have reason to assume, that the Son of God is herein revealed to us, as graciously ministering to the Patriarchs, Moses, and others, in angelic form, the question arises, what was the nature of this appearance? We are not informed, nor may we venture to determine; still, any how, the Angel was but the temporary outward form which the Eternal Word assumed, whether it was of a material nature, or a vision. Whether or no it was really an Angel, or but an appearance existing only for the immediate purpose; yet, any how, we could not with propriety say that our Lord "took upon Him the nature of Angels."

Now these instances of the indwelling of Almighty God in a created substance, which I have given by way of contrast to that infinitely higher and mysterious union which is called the Incarnation, actually supply the senses in which heretics at various times have perverted our holy and comfortable doctrine, and which have obliged us to have recourse to Creeds and Confessions. Rejecting the teaching of the Church, and dealing rudely with the Word of God, they have ventured to deny that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," pretending He merely showed Himself as a vision or phantom;—or they have said that the Son of God merely dwelt in the man Christ Jesus, as the Shechinah in the Temple, having no real union with the Son of Mary (as if there were two distinct Beings, the Word and Jesus, even as the blessed Spirit is distinct from a man's soul;);—or that Christ was called God for His great spiritual perfections, and that He gradually attained them by long practice. All these are words not to be uttered, except to show what the true doctrine is, and what is the meaning of the language of the Church concerning it. For instance, the Athanasian Creed confesses that Christ is "God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds, perfect God," lest we should consider His Divine Nature, like ours, as merely a nature resembling God's holiness; that He is "Man of the substance of His Mother, born in the world, perfect man," lest we should think of Him as "not come in the flesh," a mere Angelic vision; and "that although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but One Christ," lest we should fancy that the Word of God entered into Him and then departed, as the Holy Ghost in the Prophets.

* Exod. iii. 2. Acts vii. 35—38. Exod. xix. 3. xx. 1.

Such are the terms in which we are constrained to speak of our Lord and Saviour, by the craftiness of His enemies and our own infirmity; and we intreat His leave to do so. We intreat His leave, not as if forgetting that a reverent silence is best on so sacred a subject; but, when evil men and seducers abound on every side, and our own apprehensions of the Truth are dull, using zealous David's argument, "Is there not a cause" for words? We intreat His leave, and we humbly pray that what was first our defence against pride and indolence may become an outlet of devotion, a service of worship. Nay, we surely trust that He will accept mercifully what we offer in faith, "doing what we can;" though the ointment of spikenard which we pour out is nothing to that true Divine Glory which manifested itself in Him, when the Holy Ghost singled Him out from other men, and the Father's voice acknowledged Him as His dearly beloved Son. Surely He will mercifully accept it, if faith offers what the intellect provides; if love kindles the sacrifice, zeal fans it, and reverence guards it. He will illuminate our earthly words from His own Divine Holiness, till they become saving truths to the souls which trust in Him. He who turned water into wine, and (did He so choose) could make bread of the hard stone, will sustain us for a brief season on this mortal fare. And we the while receiving it, will never so forget its imperfection, as not to look out constantly for the True Beatific Vision; never so perversely remember it, as to reject what is necessary for our present need. The time will come, if we be found worthy, when we, who now see in a glass darkly, shall see our Lord and Saviour face to face; shall behold His countenance beaming with the fulness of Divine perfections, and bearing its own witness that He is the Son of God. We shall see Him as He is.

Let us then according to the light given us, praise and bless Him in the Church below, whom Angels in heaven see and adore. Let us bless Him for His surpassing loving-kindness in taking upon Him our infirmities to redeem us, when He dwelt in the innermost love of the Everlasting Father, in the glory which He had with Him before the world was. He came in lowliness and want; born amid the tumults of a mixed and busy multitude, cast aside into the outhouse of a crowded inn, laid to His first rest among the brute cattle. He grew up, as if the native of a despised city, and was bred to a humble craft. He bore to live in a world that slighted Him, for he lived in it, in order in due time to die for it. He came, as the appointed Priest, to offer sacrifice for those who took no part in the act of worship; He came to offer up for sinners that precious blood which was meritorious by virtue of His Divine Anointing. He died, to rise again the third day, the

Sun of Righteousness, fully displaying that splendour which had hitherto been concealed by the morning clouds. He rose again, to ascend to the right hand of God, there to plead His sacred wounds in token of our forgiveness, to rule and guide His ransomed people, and from His pierced side to pour forth His choicest blessings upon them. He ascended, thence to descend again in due season to judge the world which he has redeemed.—Great is our Lord, and great is His power, Jesus the Son of God and Son of man. Ten thousand times more dazzling bright than the highest Archangel, is our Lord and Christ. By birth the Only-begotten and Express Image of God; and in taking our flesh, not sullied thereby, but raising human nature with Him, as He rose from the lowly manger to the right hand of power,—raising human nature, for Man has redeemed us, Man is set above all creatures, as one with the Creator, Man shall judge man at the last day. So honoured is this earth, that no stranger shall judge us, but He who is our fellow, who will sustain our interests, and has full sympathy in all our imperfections. He who loved us, even to die for us, is graciously appointed to assign the final measurement and price upon His own work. He who best knows by infirmity to take the part of the infirm, He who would fain reap the full fruit of His passion, He will separate the wheat from the chaff, so that not a grain shall fall to the ground. He who has given us to share His own spiritual nature, He from whom we have drawn the life's blood of our souls, He our brother will decide about his brethren. In that His second coming, may He in His grace and loving pity remember us, who is our only hope, our only salvation!

S E R M O N I V .

THE FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN, THE MARTYR.

MARTYRDOM.

HEBREWS xi. 37.

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword.

ST. STEPHEN, who was one of the seven Deacons, is called the Protomartyr, as having first suffered death in the cause of the Gospel. Let me take the opportunity of his festival to make some remarks upon martyrdom generally.

The word Martyr properly means "a witness," but is used to denote exclusively one who has suffered *death* for the Christian faith. Those who have witnessed for Christ without suffering death, are called *Confessors*; a title which the early Martyrs often made their own, before their last solemn confession unto death, or Martyrdom. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the chief and most glorious of Martyrs, as having "before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;"* but we do not call Him a Martyr, as being much more than a Martyr. True it is, He died for the Truth; but that was not the chief purpose of His death. He died to save us sinners from the wrath of God. He was not only a Martyr; He was an Atoning Sacrifice.

He is the supreme object of our love, gratitude, and reverence. Next to Him we honour the noble army of Martyrs; not indeed comparing them with Him, "who is above all, God blessed for ever," or as if they in suffering had any part in the work of reconciliation, but because they have approached most closely to His pattern of all His servants. They have shed their blood for the Church, fulfilling the text, "He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"† They have followed His steps, and claim our grateful remembrance. Had St. Stephen shrunk from the trial put upon him, and recanted to save his life, no one can estimate the consequences of such a defection. Perhaps (humanly speaking) the cause of the Gospel would have been lost; the Church might have perished; and, though Christ had died for the world, the world might not have received the knowledge or the benefits of His death. The channels of grace might have been destroyed, the Sacraments withdrawn from the feeble and corrupt race which has such need of them.

Now it may be said, that many men suffer pain, as great as Martyrdom, from disease, and in other ways: again, that it does not follow that those who happened to be martyred were always the most useful and active defenders of the faith; and therefore, that in honouring the Martyrs, we are honouring with especial honour those to whom indeed we *may* be peculiarly indebted, (as in the case of Apostles,) but nevertheless who may have been but ordinary men, who happened to stand in the most exposed place, in the way of persecution, and were slain as if by chance, because the sword met them first. But this, it is plain, would be a strange way of reasoning in any parallel case. We are grateful to those who have done us favours, rather than to those who might or would, if it had so happened. We have no concern with the question, whether the Martyrs were the best of men or not, or whether

* 1 Tim. vi. 13.

† 1 John iii. 16.

others would have been Martyrs too, had it been allowed them. We are grateful to those who were such, from the plain matter of fact that they were such, that they did go through much suffering, in order that the world might gain an inestimable benefit, the light of the Gospel.

But, in truth, if we could view the matter considerably, we should find that (as far as human judgment can decide on such a point) the Martyrs of the primitive times were, as such, men of a very elevated faith; not only our benefactors, but far our superiors. The utmost to which any such objection as that I have stated goes, is this: to show that others who were not martyred, might be equal to them, (St. Philip the Deacon, for instance, equal to his associate St. Stephen,) not that those who were martyred were not men eminently gifted with the Spirit of Christ. For let us consider what it was then to be a Martyr.

First, it was to be a *voluntary* sufferer. Men, perhaps, suffer in various diseases more than the Martyrs did, but they cannot help themselves. Again, it has frequently happened that men have been persecuted for their religion without having expected it, or being able to avert it. These in one sense indeed are Martyrs; and we naturally think affectionately of those who have suffered in our cause, whether voluntarily or not. But this was not the case with the primitive Martyrs. They knew beforehand clearly enough the consequences of preaching the Gospel; they had frequent warnings brought home to them of the sufferings in store for them, if they persevered in their labours of brotherly love. Their Lord and Master had suffered before them; and, besides suffering Himself, had expressly *foretold their* sufferings: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."* They were repeatedly warned and strictly charged by the chief priests and rulers, not to preach in Christ's name. They had experience of lesser punishments from their adversaries in earnest of the greater; and at length they saw their brethren, one by one, slain for persevering in their faithfulness to Christ. Yet they continued to keep the faith, though they might be victims of their obedience any day.

All this must be considered when we speak of their sufferings. They lived under a continual trial, a daily exercise of faith, which we, living in peaceable times, can scarcely understand. Christ had said to His Apostles, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat."† Consider what is meant by sifting, which is a continued agitation, a shaking about to separate the mass of corn into two parts. Such was the early discipline inflicted on the Church. No mere sudden stroke came upon it; but it was solicited day by day, in all its mem-

* John xv. 20.

† Luke xxii. 31.

bers, by every argument of hope and fear, by threats and inducements, to desert Christ. This was the lot of the Martyrs. Death, their final suffering, was but the consummation of a life of anticipated death. Consider how distressing anxiety is ; how irritating and wearing it is to be in constant excitement, with the duty of maintaining calmness and steadiness in the midst of it ; and how especially inviting any prospect of tranquillity would appear in such circumstances ; and then we shall have some notion of a Christian's condition, under a persecuting heathen government. I put aside for the present the peculiar reproach and contempt which was the lot of the primitive Church, and their actual privations. Let us merely consider them as *harassed*, shaken as wheat in a sieve. Under such circumstances, the stoutest hearts are in danger of failing. They could steel themselves against certain definite sufferings, or prepare themselves to meet one expected crisis ; but they yield to the incessant annoyance which the apprehension of persecution, and the importunity of friends inflict on them. They sigh for peace ; they gradually come to believe that the world is not so wrong as some men say it is, and that it is possible to be over-strict and over-nice. They learn to temporize and be double-minded. First one falls, then another ; and such instances come as an additional argument for concession to those that remain firm as yet, who of course feel dispirited, lonely, and begin to doubt the correctness of their own judgment ; while, on the other hand, those who have fallen in self-defence become their tempters. Thus the Church is sifted, the cowardly falling off, the faithful continuing firm, though in dejection and perplexity. Among these latter are the Martyrs ; not accidental victims, taken at random, but the picked and choice ones, the elect remnant, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, because a costly gift, the finest wheat-flour of the Church : men who have been warned what to expect from their profession, and have had many opportunities of relinquishing it, but have "borne and had patience, and for Christ's name sake have laboured and have not fainted."* Such was St. Stephen, not entrapped into a confession and slain (as it were) in ambuscade, but boldly confronting his persecutors, and, in spite of circumstances that foreboded death, awaiting their fury. And if Martyrdom in early times was not the chance and unexpected death of those who happened to profess the Christian faith, much less is it to be compared to the sufferings of disease, be they greater or not. No one is maintaining that the mere undergoing pain is a great thing. A man cannot help himself when in pain ; he cannot escape from it, he is as desirous to do so as he may.

* Rev. ii. 3.

The devils bear pain, against their will. But to be a Martyr, is to feel the storm coming, and willingly to endure it at the call of duty, for Christ's sake, and for the good of the brethren ; and this is a kind of firmness which we have no means of displaying at the present day, though our deficiency in it may be, and is continually evidenced, as often as we yield (which is not seldom) to inferior and ordinary temptations.

2. But, in the next place, the suffering itself of Martyrdom was in some respects peculiar. It was a death, cruel in itself, publicly inflicted ; and, heightened by the fierce exultation of a malevolent populace. When we are in pain, we can lie in peace by ourselves. We receive the sympathy and kind services of those about us ; and if we like it, we can retire altogether from the sight of others, and suffer without a witness to interrupt us. But the sufferings of Martyrdom were for the most part public, attended with every circumstance of ignominy and popular triumph, as well as with torture. Criminals indeed are put to death without kindly thoughts from bystanders ; still, for the most part, even criminals receive commiseration and a sort of respect. But the early Christians had to endure "the shame" after their Master's pattern. They had to die in the midst of enemies who reviled them, and, in mockery, bid them (as in Christ's case) come down from the cross. They were supported on no easy couch, soothed by no attentive friends ; and considering how much the depressing power of pain depends on the imagination, this circumstance alone at once separates their sufferings widely from all instances of pain in disease. The unseen God alone was their Comforter, and this invests the scene of their suffering with supernatural majesty, and awes us when we think of them. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; *for Thou art with me.*"* A Martyrdom is a season of God's especial power in the eye of faith, as great as if a miracle were visibly wrought. It is a fellowship of Christ's sufferings, a commemoration of His death, a representation filling up in figure, "that which is behind of His afflictions, for His body's sake, which is the Church."† And thus, being an august solemnity in itself, and a kind of Sacrament, a baptism of blood, it worthily finishes that long searching trial which I have already described as being its usual forerunner in primitive times.

I have spoken only of the early Martyrs, because this Festival leads me to do so ; and, besides, because, though there have been Martyrs among us since, yet, from the time that Kings have become nursing fathers to the Church, the history of Confessors and Martyrs is so implicated with state affairs, that their conduct is not so easily separable

* Psalm xxiii. 4.

† Col. i. 24.

by us from the world around them, nor are we given to know them so clearly: though this difficulty of discerning them should invest their memory with peculiar interest when we do discern them, and their connection with civil matters, far from diminishing the high spiritual excellence of such true sons of the Church, in some respects even increases it.

To conclude.—It is useful to reflect on subjects such as that I have now laid before you, in order to humble ourselves. “We have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”* What are our petty sufferings which we make so much of, to their pains and sorrows, who lost their friends, and then their own lives for Christ’s sake; who were assaulted by all kind of temptations, the sophistry of Antichrist, the blandishments of the world, the terrors of the sword, the weariness of suspense, and yet fainted not? How far above ours are both their afflictions, and their consolations under them! Now, I know that such reflections are at once, and with far deeper reason, raised by the thought of the sufferings of Christ himself; but commonly, His transcendent holiness and depth of wo do not immediately affect us, from the very greatness of them. We sum them up in a few words, and speak without understanding. On the other hand, we rise somewhat towards the comprehension of them, when we make use of that heavenly ladder by which His Saints have made their way towards Him. By contemplating the lowest of His true servants, and seeing how far any one of them surpasses ourselves, we learn to shrink before His ineffable purity, who is infinitely holier than the holiest of His creatures; and to confess ourselves with a sincere mind to be unworthy of the least of all His mercies. Thus His Martyrs lead us to Himself, the Chief of Martyrs and the King of Saints.

May God give us grace to receive these thoughts into our hearts, and to display the fruit of them in our conduct! What are we but sinful dust and ashes, grovellers who are creeping on to Heaven, not with any noble sacrifice for Christ’s cause, but without pain, without trouble, in the midst of worldly blessings! Well; but He can save in the humblest paths of life, and in the most tranquil times. There is enough for us to do, far more than we fulfil, in our own ordinary course. Let us strive to be more humble, faithful, merciful, meek, self-denying than we are. Let us “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.”† This, to be sure, is sorry Martyrdom; yet God accepts it for His Son’s sake. Notwithstanding, after all, if we get to Heaven, surely we shall be the lowest of the Saints there assembled; and if all are unprofitable servants, we verily shall be the most unprofitable of all.

* Heb. xii. 4.

† Gal. v. 24.

SERMON V.

THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

LOVE OF RELATIONS AND FRIENDS.

1 JOHN iv. 7.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.

ST. JOHN the Apostle and Evangelist is chiefly and most familiarly known to us as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He was one of the three or four who always attended our Blessed Lord, and had the privilege of the most intimate intercourse with Him; and, more favoured than Peter, James, and Andrew, he was His bosom friend, as we commonly express ourselves. At the solemn supper before Christ suffered, he took his place next Him, and leaned on His breast. As the other three communicated between the multitude and Christ, so St. John communicated between Christ and them. At the Last Supper, Peter dared not ask Jesus a question himself, but bade John put it to Him, who it was that should betray Him. Thus St. John was the private and intimate friend of Christ. Again, it was to St. John that our Lord committed His Mother, when He was dying on the cross; it was to St. John that He revealed in vision after His departure the fortunes of His Church.

Much might be said on this remarkable circumstance. I say *remarkable*, because it might be supposed that the Son of God Most High could not have loved one man more than another; or again, if so, that He would not have had only one friend, but, as being All-holy, He would have loved all men more or less, in proportion to their holiness. Yet we find our Saviour had a private friend; and this shows us, first how entirely He was a man, as much as any of us, in His wants and feelings; and next, that there is nothing contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, nothing inconsistent with the fulness of Christian love, in having our affections directed in an especial way towards certain objects, towards those whom the circumstances of our past life, or some peculiarities of character, have endeared to us.

There have been men before now who have supposed Christian love

was so diffusive as not to admit of concentration upon individuals ; so that we ought to love all men equally. And many there are, who, without bringing forward any theory, yet consider practically that the love of many is something superior to the love of one or two ; and neglect the charities of private life, while busy in the schemes of an expansive benevolence, or of effecting a general union and conciliation among Christians. Now I shall here maintain, in opposition to such notions of Christian love, and with our Saviour's pattern before me, that the best preparation for loving the world at large, and loving it duly and wisely, is to cultivate an intimate friendship and affection towards those who are immediately about us.

It has been the plan of Divine Providence to ground what is good and true in religion and morals, on the basis of our good natural feelings. What we are towards our earthly friends in the instincts and wishes of our infancy, such we are to become at length towards God and man in the extended field of our duties as accountable beings. To honour our parents is the first step towards honouring God ; to love our brethren according to the flesh, the first step towards considering all men our brethren. Hence our Lord says, we must become as little children, if we would be saved ; we must become in His Church, as men, what we were once in the small circle of our youthful homes.—Consider how many other virtues are grafted upon natural feelings. What is Christian high-mindedness, generous self-denial, contempt of wealth, endurance of suffering, and earnest striving after perfection, but an improvement and transformation, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, of that natural character of mind which we call romantic ? On the other hand, what is the instinctive hatred and abomination of sin, (which confirmed Christians possess,) their dissatisfaction with themselves, their general refinement, discrimination, and caution, but an improvement, under the same Spirit, of their natural sensitiveness and delicacy, fear of pain, and sense of shame ? They have been chastised into self-government, by a fitting discipline, and now associate an acute sense of discomfort and annoyance with the notion of sinning. And so of the love of our fellow Christians and of the world at large, it is the love of kindred and friends in a fresh shape ; which has this use, if it had no other, that it is the natural branch on which a spiritual fruit is grafted.

But again, the love of our private friends is the only preparatory exercise for the love of others. The love of God is not the same thing as the love of our parents, though parallel to it ; but the love of mankind in general should be in the main the same habit as the love of our friends, only exercised towards different objects. The great difficulty

in our religious duties is their extent. This frightens and perplexes men,—naturally; those especially, who have neglected religion for a while, and on whom its obligations disclose themselves all at once. This, for example, is the great misery of leaving repentance till a man is in weakness or sickness; he does not know how to set about it. Now God's merciful Providence has in the natural course of things narrowed for us at first this large field of duty; He has given us a clue. We are to begin with loving our friends about us, and gradually to enlarge the circle of our affections, till it reaches all Christians, and then all men. Besides, it is obviously impossible to love all men in any strict and true sense. What is meant by loving all men, is, to feel well-disposed towards all men, to be ready to assist them, and to act towards those who come in our way, as if we loved them. We cannot love those about whom we know nothing; except indeed we view them in Christ, as the objects of His atonement, that is, rather in faith than in love. And love, besides, is a habit, and cannot be attained without actual *practice*, which on so large a scale is impossible. We see then how absurd it is, when writers (as is the manner of some who slight the Gospel,) talk magnificently about loving the whole human race with a comprehensive affection, of being the friends of all mankind, and the like. Such vaunting professions, what do they come to? that such men have certain benevolent *feelings* towards the world,—feelings and nothing more;—nothing more than unstable feelings, the mere offspring of an indulged imagination, which exist only when their minds are wrought upon, and are sure to fail them in the hour of need. This is not to love men, it is but to talk about love.—The real love of man *must* depend on practice, and therefore, must begin by exercising itself on our friends around us, otherwise it will have no existence. By trying to love our relations and friends, by submitting to their wishes, though contrary to our own, by bearing with their infirmities, by overcoming their occasional waywardness by kindness, by dwelling on their excellences, and trying to copy them, thus it is that we form in our hearts that root of charity, which, though small at first, may, like the mustard seed, at last even overshadow the earth. The vain talkers about philanthropy, just spoken of, usually show the emptiness of their profession, by being morose and cruel in the private relations of life, which they seem to account as subjects beneath their notice. Far different indeed, far different, (unless it be a sort of irreverence to contrast such dreamers with the great Apostle, whose memory we are to-day celebrating,) utterly the reverse of this fictitious benevolence was his elevated and enlightened sympathy for all men. We know he is celebrated for his declarations about Christian love. "Beloved,

let us love one another, for love is of God. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”* Now did he begin with some vast effort at loving on a large scale? Nay, he had the unspeakable privilege of being the *friend of Christ*. Thus he was taught to love others; first his affection was concentrated, then it was expanded. Next he had the solemn and comfortable charge of tending our Lord’s Mother, the Blessed Virgin, after His departure. Do we not here discern the secret sources of his especial love of the brethren? Could he, who first was favoured with his Saviour’s affection, then trusted with a son’s office towards His Mother, could he be other than a memorial and pattern (as far as man can be,) of love, deep, contemplative, fervent, unruffled, unbounded?

Further, that love of friends and relations, which nature prescribes, is also of use to the Christian, in giving form and direction to his love of mankind at large, and making it intelligent and discriminating. A man, who would fain begin by a general love of all men, necessarily puts them all on a level, and, instead of being cautious, prudent, and sympathizing in his benevolence, is hasty and rude; does harm, perhaps when he means to do good, discourages the virtuous and well-meaning, and wounds the feelings of the gentle. Men of ambitious and ardent minds, for example, desirous of doing good on a large scale, are especially exposed to the temptation of sacrificing individual to general good in their plans of charity. Ill-instructed men, who have strong abstract notions about the necessity of showing generosity and candour towards opponents, often forget to take any thought of those who are associated with themselves; and commence their (so called) liberal treatment of their enemies by an unkind desertion of their friends. This can hardly be the case, when men cultivate the private charities, as an introduction to more enlarged ones. By laying a foundation of social amiableness, we insensibly learn to observe a due harmony and order in our charity; we learn that all men are not on a level; that the interests of truth and holiness must be religiously observed; and that the Church has claims on us before the world. We can easily afford to be liberal on a large scale, when we have no affections to stand in the way. Those who have not accustomed themselves to love their neighbors whom they have seen, will have nothing to lose or gain, nothing to grieve at or rejoice in, in their larger plans of benevolence. They will take no interest in them for their own sake; rather, they will engage in them, because expedience demands, or credit is

* 1 John iv. 7. 12. 16.

gained, or an excuse found for being busy. Hence too we discern how it is, that private virtue is the only sure foundation of public virtue; and that no national good is to be expected, (though it may now and then accrue,) from men who have not the fear of God before their eyes.

I have hitherto considered the cultivation of domestic affections as the *source* of more extended Christian love. Did time permit, I might now go on to show, besides, that they involve a real and difficult exercise of it. Nothing is more likely to engender selfish habits, (which is the direct opposite and negation of charity,) than *independence* in our worldly circumstances. Men who have no tie on them, who have no calls on their daily sympathy and tenderness, who have no one's comfort to consult, who can move about as they please, and indulge the love of variety and the restless humours which are so congenial to the minds of most men, are very unfavourably situated for obtaining that heavenly gift, which is described in our Liturgy, as being "the very bond of peace and of all virtues." On the other hand I cannot fancy any state of life more favourable for the exercise of high Christian principle, and the matured and refined Christian spirit, (that is, where the parties really seek to do their duty,) than that of persons who differ in tastes and general character, being obliged by circumstances to live together, and mutually to accommodate to each other their respective wishes and pursuits.—And this is one among the many providential benefits (to those who will receive them) arising out of the Holy Estate of Matrimony; which not only calls out the tenderest and gentlest feelings of our nature, but, where persons do their duty, must be in various ways more or less a state of self-denial.

Or, again, I might go on to consider the private charities, which have been my subject, not only as the sources and as the discipline of Christian love, but further as the *perfection of it*; which they are in some cases. The Ancients thought so much of friendship, that they made it a *virtue*. In a Christian view, it is not quite this; but it is often accidentally a special *test* of our virtue. For consider;—let us say that this man, and that, not bound by any very necessary tie, find their greatest pleasure in living together; say, that this continues for years, and that they love each other's society the more, the longer they enjoy it. Now observe what is implied in this. Young people, indeed, readily love each other, for they are cheerful and innocent; more easily yield to each other, and are full of hope;—types, as Christ says, of His true converts. But this happiness does not last; their tastes change. Again, grown persons go on for years as friends; but these do not live together; and if any accident throws them into familiarity

for a while, they find it difficult to restrain their tempers and keep on terms, and discover that they are best friends at a distance. But what is it that can bind two friends together in intimate converse for a course of years, but the participation in something that is Unchangeable and essentially Good, and what is this but religion? Religious tastes alone are unalterable. The Saints of God continue in one way, while the fashions of the world change; and a faithful, indestructible friendship may thus be a test of the parties so loving each other, having the love of God seated deep in their hearts. Not an infallible test certainly; for they may have dispositions remarkably the same, or some ingrossing object of this world, literary or other; they may be removed from the temptation to change, or they may have a natural sobriety of temper which remains contented wherever it finds itself. However, under certain circumstances, it is a lively token of the presence of divine grace in them; and it is always a sort of symbol of it, for there is at first sight something of the nature of virtue in the very notion of constancy, dislike of change being not only the characteristic of a virtuous mind, but in some sense a virtue itself.

And now I have suggested to you a subject of thought for to-day's Festival,—and surely a very practical subject, when we consider how large a portion of our duties lies at home. Should God call upon us to preach to the world, surely we must obey His call; but at present, let us do what lies before us. Little children let us love one another. Let us be meek and gentle; let us think before we speak; let us try to improve our talents in private life; let us do good, not hoping for a return, and avoiding all display before men. Well may I so exhort you at this season, when we have so lately partaken together the Blessed Sacrament which binds us to mutual love, and gives us strength to practice it. Let us not forget the promise we then made, or the grace we then received. We are not our own; we are bought with the blood of Christ; we are consecrated to be temples of the Holy Spirit, an unutterable privilege, which is weighty enough to sink us with shame at our own unworthiness, did it not the while strengthen us by the aid itself imparts, to bear its extreme costliness. May we live worthy of our calling, and realize in our own persons the Church's prayers and professions for us!

SERMON VI.

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

THE MIND OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

MATTHEW xviii. 3.

Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

THE longer we live in the world, and the further removed we are from the feelings and remembrances of childhood, (and especially if removed from the sight of children,) the more reason we have to recollect our Lord's impressive action and word, when He called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of His disciples, and said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven." And in order to remind us of this our Saviour's judgment, the Church, like a careful teacher, calls us back year by year upon this day from the bustle and fever of the world. She takes advantage of the Massacre of the Innocents recorded in St. Matthew's gospel, to bring before us a truth which else we might think little of; to sober our wishes and hopes of this world, our high ambitious thoughts, or our anxious fears, jealousies, and cares, by the picture of the purity, peace, and contentment which are the characteristics of little children.

And, independently of the benefit thus accruing to us, it is surely right and meet thus to celebrate the death of the Holy Innocents; for it was a blessed one. To be brought near to Christ, and to suffer for Christ, is surely an unspeakable privilege; to suffer any how, even unconsciously. The little children whom He took up in His arms, were not conscious of His loving condescension; but was it no privilege when He blessed them? Surely this massacre had in it the nature of a Sacrament; it was a pledge of the love of the Son of God towards those who were encompassed by it. All who came near Him, more

or less suffered by approaching Him, just as if earthly pain and trouble went out of Him, as some precious virtue for the good of their souls;—and these infants in the number. Surely His very presence was a Sacrament; every motion, look, and word of His conveying grace to those who would receive it; and much more was fellowship with Him. And hence in ancient times such barbarous murders or Martyrdoms were considered as a kind of baptism, a baptism of blood, with a sacramental charm in it which stood in the place of the appointed Laver of regeneration. Let us then take these little children as in some sense Martyrs, and see what instruction we may gain from the pattern of their innocence.

There is very great danger of our becoming cold-hearted, as life goes on; afflictions which happen to us, cares, disappointments, all tend to blunt our affections and make our feelings callous. That necessary self-discipline, too, which St. Paul enjoins Timothy to practise, tends the same way. And, again, the pursuit of wealth especially; and much more, if men so far openly transgress the word of Almighty God, as to yield to the temptations of sensuality. The glutton and the drunkard brutalize their minds, as is evident. And then further, we are often smit with the notion of our having become greater and more considerable persons than we were. If we are prosperous, for instance, in worldly matters, if we rise in the scale of (what is called) society, if we gain a name, if we change our state by marriage, or in any other way so as to create a secret envy in the minds of our companions, in all these cases we shall be exposed to the temptation of *pride*. The deference paid to wealth or talent commonly makes the possessor artificial, and difficult to reach: glossing over his mind with a spurious refinement, which deadens feeling and heartiness. Now, after all, there is in most men's minds a secret instinct of reverence and affection towards the days of their childhood. They cannot help sighing with regret and tenderness when they think of it; and it is graciously done by our Lord and Saviour, to avail Himself (so to say) of this principle of our nature, and, as He employs all that belongs to it, so to turn this also to the real health of the soul. And it is dutifully done on the part of the Church to follow the intimation given her by her Redeemer, and to hallow one day every year, as if for the contemplation of His word and deed.

If we wish to affect a person, and (if so be) humble him, what can we do better than appeal to the memory of times past, and above all to his childhood? Then it was that he came out of the hands of God, with all lessons and thoughts of Heaven freshly marked upon him. Who can tell how God makes the soul, or how He new-makes it? We know not. We know that, besides His part in the work, it comes into

the world with the taint of sin upon it; and that even regeneration, which removes the curse, does not extirpate the root of evil. Whether it is created in Heaven or hell, how Adam's sin is breathed into it, together with the breath of life, and how the Spirit dwells in it, who shall inform us? But this we know full well,—we know it from our own recollection of ourselves, and our experience of children,—that there is in the infant soul, in the first years of its regenerate state, a discernment of the unseen world in the things that are seen, a realization of what is Sovereign and Adorable, and an incredulity and ignorance about what is transient and changeable, which mark it as the fit emblem of the matured Christian, when weaned from things temporal, and living in the intimate conviction of the Divine Presence. I do not mean of course that a child has any formed principle in its heart, any habits of obedience, any true discrimination between the visible and the unseen, such as God promises to reward, for Christ's sake, in those who come to years of discretion. Never must we forget that, in spite of his new birth, evil is within him, though in its seed only;—but he has this one great gift, that he seems to have lately come from God's presence, and not to understand the language of this visible scene, or how it is a temptation, how it is a veil interposing itself between the soul and God. The simplicity of a child's ways and notions, his ready belief of everything he is told, his artless love, his frank confidence, his confession of helplessness, his ignorance of evil, his inability to conceal his thoughts, his contentment, his prompt forgetfulness of trouble, his admiring without coveting; and above all, his reverential spirit, looking at all things about him as wonderful, as tokens and types of the One Invisible, are all evidence of his being lately (as it were) a visitant in a higher state of things. I would only have a person reflect on the earnestness and awe with which a child listens to any description or tale; or again, his freedom from that spirit of proud independence, which discovers itself in the soul as time goes on. And though, doubtless, children are generally of a weak and irritable nature, and all are not equally amiable, yet their passions go and are over like a shower; not interfering with the lesson we may gain to our own profit from their ready faith and guilelessness.

The distinctness with which the conscience of a child tells him the difference between right and wrong should also be mentioned. As persons advance in life, and yield to the temptations which come upon them, they lose this original endowment, and are obliged to grope about by the mere reason. If they debate whether they should act in this way or that, and there are many considerations of duty and interest involved in the decision, they feel altogether perplexed. Really and

truly, not from self-deception, but really they do not know how they ought to act; and they are obliged to draw out arguments, and take a great deal of pains to come to a conclusion. And all this, in many cases at least, because they have lost through sinning a guide which they originally had from God. Hence it is that St. John, in the Epistle for the day, speaks of Christ's undefiled servants as "following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They have the minds of children, and are able by the light within them to decide questions of duty at once, undisturbed by the perplexity of discordant arguments.

In what has already been said, it has been implied how striking a pattern a child's mind gives us of what may be called a church temper. Christ has so willed it, that we should get at the Truth, not by ingenious speculations, reasonings, or investigations of our own, but by teaching. The Holy Church has been set up from the beginning as a solemn religious fact, so to call it,—as a picture, a revelation of the next world—as itself the Christian Dispensation, and so in one sense the witness of its own divinity, as is the Natural World. Now, those who in the first place receive her words, have the minds of children who do not reason, but obey, their mother; and those who from the first refuse, as clearly fall short of children in that they trust their own powers for truth, rather than informants which are external to them.

In conclusion, I shall but remind you of the difference, on the other hand, between the state of a child and that of a matured Christian; though this difference is almost too obvious to be noticed. St. John says, "He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous;" and again, "Every one that *doeth* righteousness is born of Him."* Now it is plain a child's innocence has no share in this higher blessedness. He is but a type of what is at length to be fulfilled in him. The chief beauty of his mind is on its mere surface; and when as time goes on, he attempts to act, (as is his duty to do,) instantly it disappears. It is only while he is still, that he is like a tranquil water, reflecting Heaven. Therefore we must not lament that our youthful days are gone, or sigh over the remembrances of pure pleasures and contemplations which we cannot recall; rather what we were when children, is a blessed *intimation*, given for our comfort, of what God will make us, if we surrender our hearts to the guidance of His Holy Spirit,—a prophecy of good to come,—a foretaste of what will be fulfilled in heaven. And thus it is that a child is a pledge of immortality; for he bears upon him in figure those high and eternal excellences in which the joy of heaven consists; and which would not be thus sha-

* 1 John iii. 7. ii. 29.

dowed forth by the All-gracious Creator, were they not one day to be realized. Accordingly, our Church, for the Epistle for this Festival, selects St. John's description of the Saints in glory.

As then we would one day reign with them, let us in this world learn the mind of little children, as the same Apostle describes it: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love."*

SERMON VII.

THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH.

MATT. iii. 15.

Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

WHEN our Lord came to John to be baptized, He gave this reason for it, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" which seems to mean,—“it is becoming in Me, the expected Christ, to conform in all respects to all the rites and ceremonies of Judaism, to every thing hitherto accounted sacred and binding.” Hence it was that He came to be baptized, to show that it was not His intention in any way to dishonour the Established Religion, but to fulfil it even in those parts of it (such as Baptism) which were later than the time of Moses; and especially to acknowledge thereby the mission of John the Baptist, His forerunner. And those ordinances which Moses himself was commissioned to appoint, had still greater claim to be respected and observed. It was on this account that He was circumcised, as we this day commemorate; in order, that is, to show that he did not renounce the reli-

* 1 John iii. 18. iv. 7, 8.

gion of Abraham, to whom God gave circumcision, or of Moses, by whom it was embodied in the Jewish Law.

We have other instances in our Lord's history, besides those of His circumcision and baptism, to show the reverence with which He regarded the religion which he came to fulfil. St. Paul speaks of Him as "born of a woman, born under the Law,"* and it was His custom to observe that Law, like any other Jew. For instance, He went up to the feasts at Jerusalem; He sent the persons He had cured to the priests, to offer the sin-offering commanded by Moses; He paid the Temple-tax; and again, He attended as "a custom" the worship of the synagogue, though this had been introduced in an age long after Moses; and He even bade the multitudes obey the Scribes and Pharisees in all lawful things, as those who sat in Moses' place.†

Such was our Saviour's dutiful attention to the religious system under which he was born; and that, not only so far as it was directly divine, but further, where it was the ordinance of uninspired though pious men, where it was but founded on ecclesiastical authority. His Apostles followed His pattern; and this is still more remarkable:—because after the Holy Spirit had descended, at first sight it would have appeared that all the Jewish Ordinances ought at once to cease. But this was far from being the doctrine of the Apostles. They taught indeed that the Jewish rites were no longer of any use in obtaining God's favour; that Christ's death was now set forth as the full and sufficient Atonement for sin, by that Infinite Mercy who had hitherto appointed the blood of the sacrifices as in some sort means of propitiation; and, besides, that every convert who turned from Christ back to Moses, or who imposed the Jewish rites upon his brethren as necessary to salvation, was grievously erring against the Truth. But they neither abandoned the Jewish rites themselves, nor obliged any others to do so who were used to them. Custom was quite a sufficient reason for retaining them; every Christian was to remain in the state in which he was called; and in the case of the Jew, the practice of them did not necessarily interfere with a true and full trust in the Atonement which Christ had offered for sin.

St. Paul, we know, was the most strenuous opposer of those who would oblige the Gentiles to become Jews, as a previous step to their becoming Christians. Yet, decisive as he is against all attempts to force the Gentiles under the rites of Law, he never bids the Jews renounce them, rather he would have them retain them; leaving it for a fresh generation, who had not been born under them, to discontinue

* Gal. iv. 4.

† Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

them; so that the use of them might gradually die away. Nay, he himself circumcised Timothy, when he chose him for his associate; in order that no offence might be given to the Jews.* And how freely he adhered to the Law in his own person, we learn from the same inspired history; for instance, we hear of his shaving his head, as having been under a vow,† according to the Jewish custom.

Now from this obedience to the Jewish Law, enjoined and displayed by our Blessed Lord and His Apostles, we learn the great importance of retaining those religious forms to which we are accustomed, even though they are in themselves indifferent, or not of divine origin; and, as this is a truth which is not well understood by the world at large, it it may be of use to make some observations upon it.

We sometimes meet with men, who ask *why* we observe these or those ceremonies or practices; why, for example, we use Forms of prayer so cautiously and strictly, or why we persist in kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? why in bowing at the name of Jesus? or why in celebrating the public worship of God only in consecrated places? why we lay such stress upon these things? These and many such questions may be asked, and all with this argument; "They are indifferent matters, we do not read of them in the Bible."

Now the direct answer to this objection is, that the Bible was never *intended* to enjoin us these things, but *matters of faith*; and that though it happens to mention our practical duties, and some points of form and discipline, still, that it does not set about telling us what to do, but chiefly what to believe; and that there are many duties and many crimes which are not mentioned in Scripture, and which we must find out by our own understanding, enlightened by God's Holy Spirit. For instance, there is no prohibition of suicide, duelling, gaming, in Scripture; yet we know them to be great sins; and it would be no excuse in a man to say that he does not find them forbidden in Scripture, because he may discover God's will in this matter independently of Scripture. And in like manner various matters of form and discipline are binding, though Scripture says nothing about them; for we learn the duty in another way. No matter how we learn God's will, whether from Scripture or Antiquity, or what St. Paul calls "Nature," so that we can be sure it is His will. Matters of faith indeed He reveals to us by inspiration, because they are supernatural; but matters of moral duty, through our own conscience and divinely guided reason; and matters of form, by tradition and long usage, which bind us to the observance of them, though they are not

* Acts xvi. 1—3.

† Acts xviii. 18.

enjoined in Scripture. This, I say, is the proper answer to the question, "Why do you observe rites and forms which are not enjoined in Scripture?" though, to speak the truth, our chief ordinances *are* to be found there, as the Sacraments, Public Worship, the Observance of the Lord's day, Ordination, Marriage, and the like. But I shall make another answer, which is suggested by the event commemorated this day, our Lord's conforming to the Jewish Law in the rite of circumcision; and my answer is this.

Scripture tells us what to believe, and what to aim at and maintain, but it does not tell us *how* to do it; and as we cannot do it at all unless we do it in this manner or that, we must add something to what Scripture tells us. For example, Scripture tells us to meet together for prayer, and has connected the grant of the Christian blessings on God's part, with the observance of *union* on ours; but since it does not tell us the times and places of prayer, the Church *must* complete that which Scripture has but enjoined generally. Our Lord has instituted two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but has not told us, except generally, with what forms we are to administer them. Yet we *cannot* administer them without some sort of prayers; whether we use always the same, or not the same, or unpremeditated prayers. And so with many other solemn acts, such as Ordination, or Marriage, or Burial of the dead, it is evidently pious, and becomes Christians to perform them decently and in faith; yet how is this to be done, unless the Church sanctions Forms of doing it?

The Bible then may be said to give us the *spirit* of religion; but the Church must provide the body in which that spirit is to be lodged. Religion must be realized in particular acts, in order to its continuing alive. Religionists, for example, who give up the Church rites, are forced to recall the strict Judaical Sabbath. There is no such thing as abstract religion. When persons attempt to worship in this (what they call) more spiritual manner, they end, in fact, in not worshipping at all. This frequently happens. Every one may know it from his own experience of himself. Youths, for instance, (and perhaps those who should know better than they,) sometimes argue with themselves, "What is the need of praying stately morning and evening? why use a form of words? why kneel? why cannot I pray in bed, or walking, or dressing?" they end in not praying at all. Again, what will the devotion of the country people be, if we strip religion of its external symbols, and bid them seek out and gaze upon the Invisible? Scripture gives the *spirit*, and the Church the *body*, to our worship; and we may as well expect that the spirits of men might be seen by us without the intervention of their bodies, as suppose that the Object of faith can

be realized in a world of sense and excitement without the instrumentality of an outward form to arrest and fix attention, to stimulate the careless and to encourage the desponding. But observe what follows;—who would say our bodies are not part of ourselves? We may apply the illustration; for in like manner the forms of devotion are parts of devotion? Who can in practice separate his view of body and spirit? for example, what a friend would he be to us who should treat us ill, or deny us food, or imprison us; and say, after all, that it was our body he ill-treated, and not our soul? Even so, no one can really respect religion, and insult its form. Granting that the forms are not immediately from God, still long use has made them divine *to us*; for the spirit of religion has so penetrated and quickened them, that to destroy them is in respect to the multitude of men to unsettle and dislodge the religious principle itself. In most minds usage has so identified them with the notion of religion, that the one cannot be extirpated without the other. Their faith will not bear transplanting. Till we have given some attention to the peculiarities of human nature, whether from watching our own hearts, or from experience of life, we can scarcely form a correct estimate how intimately great and little matters are connected together in all cases; how the circumstances and accidents (as they might seem) of our habits are almost conditions of those habits themselves. How common it is for men to have *seasons* of seriousness, how exact is their devotion during them, how suddenly they come to an end, how completely all traces of them vanish, yet how comparatively trifling is the case of the relapse, a change of place, or occupation, or a day's interruption of regularity in their religious course? Consider the sudden changes in opinion and profession, religious or secular, which occur in life, the proverbial fickleness of the multitude, the influence of watchwords and badges upon the fortunes of political parties, the surprising falls which sometimes overtake well-meaning and really respectable men, the inconsistencies of even the holiest and most perfect, and you will have some insight into the danger of practising on the externals of faith and devotion. Precious doctrines are strung, like jewels, upon slender threads.

Our Saviour and His Apostles sanction these remarks, in their treatment of those Jewish ceremonies, which have led me to make them. St. Paul calls them weak and unprofitable, weak and beggarly elements.* So they were in themselves, but to those who were used to them, they were an edifying and living service. Else why did the Apostles observe them? Why did they recommend them to the Jews

* Hebr. vii. 18. Gal. iv. 9.

whom they converted? Were they merely consulting for the prejudices of a reprobate nation? The Jewish rites were to disappear; yet no one was bid forcibly separate himself from what he had long used lest he lost his sense of religion also. Much more will this hold good with forms such as ours, which, so far from being abrogated by the Apostles were introduced by them or their immediate successors; and which, besides the influence they exert over us from long usage, are many of them witnesses and types of precious gospel truths; nay, much more, possess a sacramental nature, and are adapted and reasonably accounted to convey a gift, even where they are not formally sacraments by Christ's institutions. Who, for instance could be hard-hearted and perverse enough to ridicule the notion that a father's blessing may profit his children, even though Christ and His Apostles have not in so many words declared it.

Much might be said on this subject, which is a very important one. In these times especially, we should be on our guard against those, who hope by inducing us to lay aside our forms, at length to make us lay aside our Christian hope altogether. This is why the Church itself is attacked, because it is the living form, the visible body of religion; and shrewd men know that when it goes, religion will go too. This is why they rail at so many usages as superstitious; or propose alterations and changes, a measure especially calculated to shake the faith of the multitude. Recollect then, that things indifferent in themselves, become important to us when we are used to them. The services and ordinances of the Church are the outward form in which religion has been for ages represented to the world, and has ever been known to us. Places consecrated to God's honour, clergy carefully set apart for His service, the Lord's-day piously observed, the public forms of prayer, the decencies of worship, these things viewed as a whole are *sacred* relatively to us, even if they were not, as they are, divinely sanctioned. Rites, which the Church has appointed, and with reason, for the Church's authority is from Christ, being long used, cannot be disused without harm to our souls. Confirmation, for instance, may be argued against and undervalued; but surely no one in the common run of men wilfully resists the Ordinance, but will thereby be *visibly* a worse Christian than he otherwise would have been. He will find (or rather others will find for him, for he will scarcely know it himself,) that he has declined in faith, humility, devotional feeling, reverence and sobriety. And so in the case of all other forms, even the least binding in themselves, it continually happens that a speculative improvement is a practical folly, and the wise are taken in their own craftiness.

Therefore, when profane persons scoff at our forms, let us argue with

ourselves, thus; and it is an argument which all men, learned or unlearned, can enter into. "These forms, even were they of mere human origin, (which learned men say is *not* the case, but even if they were,) are as least of as spiritual and edifying a character as the rites of Judaism. Yet Christ and His Apostles did not even suffer these latter to be irreverently treated or suddenly discarded. Much less may we suffer it in the case of our own; lest stripping off from us the badges of our profession, we forget there is a faith for us to maintain, and a world of sinners to be eschewed."

SERMON VIII.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

THE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

ISAIAH lx. 1.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

OUR Saviour said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."* And upon to-day's Festival I may say to you in His words on another occasion, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." This day we commemorate the opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, the extension of the Church of God through all lands, whereas, before Christ's coming, it had been confined to one nation only. This dissemination of the Truth throughout the world had been the subject of prophecy, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations. Spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the

* John iv. 21.

desolate cities to be inhabited.”* In these words the Church is addressed as Catholic; which is the distinguishing title of the Christian Church, as contrasted with the Jewish. The Christian Church is so constituted as to be able to spread itself out in its separate branches into all regions of the earth; so that in every nation there may be found a representative and an offshoot of the sacred and gifted Society, set up once for all by our Lord after His resurrection.

This characteristic blessing of the Church of Christ, its Catholic nature, is a frequent subject of rejoicing with St. Paul, who was the chief instrument of its propagation. In one Epistle he speaks of Gentiles being “fellow-heirs” with the Jews, “and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.” In another he enlarges on the “mystery now made manifest to the saints, viz. Christ among the Gentiles, the hope of glory.”†

The day on which we commemorate this gracious appointment of God’s Providence is called the Epiphany, or bright manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles; being the day on which the wise-men came from the East under guidance of a star, to worship Him, and thus became the first-fruits of the heathen world. The name is explained by the words of the text, which occur in one of the lessons selected for to-day’s service, and in which the Church is addressed. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.”‡

That this and other similar prophecies had their measure of fulfilment when Christ came, we all know; when His Church built upon the Apostles and Prophets, wonderfully branched out from Jerusalem as a centre into the heathen world round about, and gathering into it men of all ranks, languages, and characters, moulded them upon one pattern, the pattern of their Saviour, in truth, and righteousness. Thus the prophecies concerning the Church were fulfilled at that time in two respects, as regards its sanctity and its Catholicity.

It is often asked, have these prophecies had then and since their perfect accomplishment? Or are we to expect a more complete Christianizing of the world than has hitherto been vouchsafed it? And it is usual at the present day to acquiesce in the latter alternative, as if the inspired predictions certainly meant more than has yet been realized.

* Is. liv. 2, 3.

† Eph. iii. 6. Col. i. 26, 27.

‡ Is. lx. 1-3. 21.

Now so much I think is plain on the face of them, that the Gospel is to be preached in all lands before the end comes : "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come."* Whether it has been thus preached is a question of fact, which must be determined, not from the prophecy, but from history ; and there we may leave it. But as to the other expectation, that a time of greater purity is in store for the Church, that is not easily to be granted. The very words of Christ just quoted, so far from speaking of the gospel as tending to the conversion of the world at large, when preached in it, describe it only as a *witness* unto all the Gentiles, as if the many would not obey it. And this intimation runs parallel to St. Paul's account of the Jewish Church as realizing faith and obedience only in a residue out of the whole people ; and is further illustrated by St. John's language in the Apocalypse, who speaks of "the redeemed from among men," being but a remnant, "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb."†

However, I will readily allow that at first we shall feel a reluctance in submitting to this opinion, with such passages before us as that which occurs in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, where it is promised, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." I say it is natural, with such texts in the memory, to look out for what is commonly called a Millennium. It may be instructive then upon this day to make some remarks in explanation of the state and prospects of the Christian Church in this respect.

Now the system of this world depends, in a way unknown to us, both on God's Providence and on human agency. Every event, every course of action, has two faces ; it is divine and perfect, and it belongs to man, and is marked with his sin. I observe next, that it is a peculiarity of Holy Scripture to represent the world on its providential side ; ascribing all that happens in it to Him who rules and directs it, as it moves along, tracing events to His sole agency, or viewing them only so far forth as he acts in them. Thus He is said to harden Pharaoh's heart, and to hinder the Jews from believing in Christ ; wherein is signified His absolute sovereignty over all human affairs and courses. As common is it for Scripture to consider Dispensations, not in their actual state, but as His agency would mould them, and so far as it really does succeed in realizing them. For instance ; "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we

* Matt. xxiv. 14.

† Rom. xi. 5. Rev. xiv. 4.

were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”* This is said as if the Ephesians had no traces left in their hearts of Adam’s sin and spiritual death. As it is said afterwards, “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.”†

In other words, Scripture more commonly speaks of the divine *design* and *substantial work*, than of the *measure* of fulfilment which it receives at this time or that; as St. Paul expresses, when he says that the Ephesians were chosen, that they “should be holy and unblameable before Him in love.” Or it speaks of the *profession* of the Christian; as when he says, “as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ;”—or of the *tendency* of the Divine gift in a long period of time, and of its *ultimate fruits*; as in the words, “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish,”‡ in which Baptism and final salvation are viewed as if indissolubly connected. This rule of Scripture interpretation admits of very extensive application, and I proceed to illustrate it.

The principle under consideration is this; that, whereas God is one, and His will one, and His purpose one, and His work one, whereas all he is and does is absolutely perfect and complete, independent of time and place, and sovereign over creation, whether inanimate or moral, yet that in His actual dealings with this world, that is, in all in which we see His Providence, in that man is imperfect, and has a will of his own, and lives in time, and is moved by circumstances, He seems to work by a process, by means and ends, by steps, by victories hardly gained, and failures repaired, and sacrifices ventured. Thus it is only when we view His dispensations at a distance, as the Angels do, that we see their harmony and their unity; whereas Scripture, anticipating the end from the beginning, places at their very head and first point of origination all that belongs to them respectively in their fulness.

We find some exemplification of this principle in the call of Abraham. In every age of the world it has held good that the just shall live by faith; yet it was determined in the deep councils of God, that for a while this truth should be partially obscured, as far as His revelations went; that man should live by sight, miracles and worldly ordinances taking the place of silent providences and spiritual services. In the later times of the Jewish Law the original doctrine was brought to light, and when the Divine object of faith was born into the world, it

* 1 Eph. ii. 4, 5.

† Eph. v. 8.

‡ Eph. i. 4. Gal. iii. 27. Eph. v. 25—27.

was authoritatively set forth by His Apostles as the basis of all acceptable worship. But observe, it had been already anticipated in the instance of Abraham; the evangelical covenant, which was not to be preached till near two thousand years afterwards, was revealed and transacted in his person. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto Him for righteousness." "Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad."* Nay, in the commanded sacrifice of His Beloved Son, was shadowed out the true Lamb which God had provided for a burnt-offering. Thus in the call of the Patriarch, in whose Seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, the great outlines of the Gospel were anticipated; in that he was called in uncircumcision, he was justified by faith, he trusted in God's power to raise the dead, he looked forward to the day of Christ, and he was vouchsafed a vision of the Atoning Sacrifice on Calvary.

We call these notices *prophecy*, popularly speaking, and doubtless such they are to us, and to be received and used thankfully; but more properly perhaps, they are merely instances of the harmonious movement of God's word and deed, his sealing up events from the first. His introducing them once and for all, though they are but gradually unfolded to our limited faculties, and in this transitory scene. It would seem that at the time when Abraham was called, both the course of the Jewish dispensation, and the coming of Christ, were (so to say) realized; so as in one sense, to be actually done and over. Hence, in one passage, Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" in another, it is said, that "Levi paid tithes" to Melchizedek, "in Abraham."†

Similar remarks might be made on the call and reign of David, and the building of the second Temple.‡

* Rom iv. 3. John viii. 56.

† Rev. xiii. 8. Heb. vii. 9.

‡ In the instance of the first [Temple] there clearly is not the same combination of the Mystical sense with the Temporal. The prediction joined with the building of Solomon's Temple is of a simple kind; perhaps it relates purely and solely to the proper Temple itself. But the second Temple rises with a different structure of prophecy upon it. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, have each delivered some symbolical prediction, connected with it, or with its priesthood and worship. Why this difference in the two cases? I think the answer is clear; it is a difference obviously relating to the nearer connexion which the second Temple has with the Gospel. When God gave them their first Temple, it was doomed to fall, and rise again, *under* and *during* their first economy. The elder prophecy, therefore, was directed to the proper history of the first Temple. But when he gave them their second Temple, Christianity was then nearer in view; through that second edifice lay the Gospel prospect. Its restoration, therefore, was marked by a kind of prophecy, which had its vision towards the Gospel."—DAVISON ON PROPHECY, Discourse vi. part 4.

In like manner the Christian Church had in the day of its nativity all that fulness of holiness and peace named upon it, and sealed up to it, which becomed it, viewed as God's design, viewed in its essence, as it is realized at all times and under whatever circumstances, viewed as God's work without man's co-operation, viewed as God's work in its tendency, and in its ultimate blessedness; so that the titles given it upon earth are a picture of what it will be absolutely in heaven. This might also be instanced in the case of the Jewish Church, as in Jeremiah's description; "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of His increase."* As to the Christian Church, one passage descriptive of its blessedness from its first founding has already been cited; to which I add the following by way of specimen: "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy Children." "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doeth." "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise."† In these passages, which in their context certainly refer to the time of Christ's coming, an universality and a purity are promised to the Church, which have their fulfilment only in the course of its history from first to last, as foreshortened and viewed as one whole.

Consider, again, the representations given us of Christ's Kingdom. First, it is called the "Kingdom of *Heaven*," though on earth. Again, in the Angels' hymn, it is proclaimed "on earth peace," in accordance with the prophetic description of the Messiah as "the Prince of Peace;" though He Himself, speaking of the earthly, not the divine side of His dispensation, said, He came "not to send peace on earth, but a sword."‡

* Jer. ii. 2, 3. † Isa. lxii. 2, 3, 5; lxx. 10, 13; xlix. 16, 18; lx. 18. ‡ Matt. x. 34.

Further, consider Gabriel's announcement to the Virgin concerning her Son and Lord; "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Or, as the same Saviour had been foretold by Ezekiel; "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them . . . I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about My hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing;"* It is observable that in the two passages last cited, the Christian Church is considered as merely the continuation of the Jewish, as if the Gospel existed in its germ even under the Law.

Now it is undeniable, and so blessed a truth that one would not wish at all to question it, that when Christ first came, His followers were in a state of spiritual purity, far above any thing which we witness in the Church at this day. That glory with which her face shone, as Moses of old time, from communion with her Saviour on the holy Mount, is the earnest of what will one day be perfected; it is a token held out to us of a dark age, that His promise stands sure, and admits of accomplishment. They continued "in gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." Here was a pledge of eternal blessedness, the same in kind as a child's innocence is a foreshadowing of a holy immortality; and the baptismal robe, of the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints;—a pledge like the typical promises made to David, Solomon, Cyrus, or Joshua the high-priest. Yet at the same time the corruptions in the early Church, Galatian misbelief, and Corinthian excess, show too clearly that her early glories were not more than a pledge, except in the case of individuals, a pledge of God's purpose, a witness of man's depravity.

The same interpretation will apply to the Scripture account of the Elect People of God, which is but the Church of Christ under another name. On them, upon their election, are bestowed, as on a body, the gifts of justification, holiness, and final salvation. The perfections of Christ are shed around them; His image is reflected from them; so that they receive His Name, as being in Him, and beloved of God in the Beloved. Thus in their election are sealed up, to be unrolled and enjoyed in due season, the successive privileges of the heirs of light. In God's *purpose*—according to His *grace*—in the *tendency* and ulti-

* Luke i. 32, 33. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 25, 26.

mate effects of His dispensation—to be called and chosen is to be saved. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate; whom He did predestinate, them he also called; whom He called, them He also justified; whom He justified, them He also glorified.”* Observe, the whole scheme is spoken of as of a thing past; for in His deep counsel He contemplated from everlasting the one entire work, and having decreed it, it is but a matter of time, of sooner or later, when it will be realized. As the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, so also were His redeemed gathered in from the first according to His foreknowledge; and it is not more inconsistent with the solemn announcement of the text just cited, that some once elected should fall away, (as we know they do,) than that an event should be spoken of in it as past and perfect, which is incomplete and future. All accidents are excluded, when He speaks; the present and the to come, delays and failures, vanish before the thought of His perfect work. And hence it happens that the word “elect” in Scripture has two senses, standing both for those who are called *in order* to salvation, and for those, who at the last day, shall be the *actually resulting fruit* of that holy call. For God’s Providence moves by great and comprehensive laws; and His word is the mirror of His designs, not of man’s partial success in thwarting His gracious will.

The Church then, considered as one army militant, proceeding forward from the house of bondage to Canaan, gains the victory, and accomplishes what is predicted of her, though many soldiers fall in the battle. While, however, they remain within her lines, they are included in her blessedness so far as to be partakers of the gifts flowing from election. And hence it is that so much stress is to be laid upon the duty of united worship; for thus the multitude of believers coming together, claim as one man the grace which is poured out upon the one undivided body of Christ mystical. “Where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them;” nay rather, blessed be His name! He is so one with them, that they are not their own, lose for the time their earth-stains, are radiant in His infinite holiness, and have the promise of His eternal favour. Viewed as one, the Church is still His image as at the first, pure and spotless, His spouse all-glorious within, the Mother of Saints; according to the Scripture, “My dove, My undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the elect one of her that bare her . . . Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.”†

And what is true of the Church as a whole, is represented in Scrip-

* Rom. viii. 29, 30.

† Cant. vi. 9; iv. 7.

ture as belonging also in some sense to each individual in it. I mean, that as the Christian body was set up in the image of Christ, which is gradually and in due season to be realized within it, so in like manner, each of us, when made a Christian, is entrusted with gifts which centre in eternal salvation. St. Peter says, we are "saved" through baptism; St. Paul, that we are "saved according to God's mercy by the washing of regeneration;" our Lord joins together water and the Spirit; St. Paul connects baptism with putting on Christ; and in another place with being "sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* To the same purport are our Lord's words: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is *passed* from death unto life."†

These remarks have been made with a view of showing the true sense in which we must receive, on the one hand, the prophetic descriptions of the Christian Church; on the other, the grant of its privileges, and of those of its separate members. Nothing is more counter to the spirit of the Gospel than to hunger after signs and wonders; and the rule of Scripture interpretation now given, is especially adapted to wean us from such wandering of heart. It is our duty, rather it is our blessedness, to walk by faith; therefore, we will take the promises (with God's help) in faith? we will believe they are fulfilled, and enjoy the fruit of them before we see it. We will fully acknowledge, as being firmly persuaded, that His word cannot return unto Him void; that it has its mission, and must prosper so far as substantially to accomplish it. We will adore the Blessed Spirit, as coming and going as He listeth, and doing wonders daily which the world knows not of. We will consider Baptism and the other Christian Ordinances, effectual signs of grace, not forms and shadows, though men abuse and profane them; and particularly, as regards our immediate subject, we will unlearn, as sober and serious men, the expectation of any public displays of God's glory in the edification of His Church, seeing she is all-glorious *within*, in that inward shrine, made up of faithful hearts, and inhabited by the Spirit of grace. We will put off, so be it, all secular, all political views of the victories of His kingdom. While labouring to unite its fragments, which the malice of Satan has scattered to and fro, to recover what is cast away, to purify what is corrupted, to strengthen what is weak, to make it in all its parts what Christ would have it, a Church

* 1 Peter iii. 21. Tit. iii. 5. John iii. 5. Gal. iii. 27. 1 Cor. vi. 11.

† John v. 24.

Militant, still (please God) we will not reckon on any visible fruit of our labour. We will be content to believe our cause triumphant, when we see it apparently defeated. We will silently bear the insults of the enemies of Christ, and resign ourselves meekly to the shame and suffering which the errors of His followers bring upon us. We will endure offences which the early Saints would have marvelled at, and Martyrs would have died to redress. We will work with zeal, but as to the Lord and not to men; recollecting that even Apostles saw the sins of the Churches they planted; that St. Paul predicted that "evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse;" and that St. John seems even to consider extraordinary unbelief as the very sign of the times of the Gospel, as if the light increased the darkness of those who hated it. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time."*

Therefore we will seek within for the Epiphany of Christ. We will look towards his Holy Altar, and approach it for the fire of love and purity which there burns. We will find comfort in the illumination which Baptism gives. We will rest and be satisfied in His ordinances and in His word. We will bless and praise His name, whenever he vouchsafes to display His glory to us in the chance-meeting of any of His Saints, and we will ever pray Him to manifest it in our own souls.

SERMON IX.

THE FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL. HIS CONVERSION VIEWED IN REFERENCE TO HIS OFFICE.

1 COR. XV. 9, 10.

I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

To DAY we commemorate, not the whole History of St. Paul, nor his Martyrdom, but his wonderful Conversion. Every season of his life is

* 2 Tim. iii. 13. 1 John ii. 18.

full of wonders, and admits of a separate commemoration ; which indeed we do make, whenever we read the Acts of the Apostles, or his Epistles. On this his day, however, that event is selected for remembrance, which was the beginning of his wonderful course ; and we may profitably pursue (please God) the train of thought thus opened for us.

We cannot well forget the manner of his conversion. He was journeying to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to seize the Christians, and bring them to Jerusalem. He had sided with the persecuting party from their first act of violence, the martyrdom of St. Stephen ; and he continued foremost in a bad cause, with blind rage endeavouring to defeat what really was the work of Divine power and wisdom. In the midst of his fury, he was struck down by miracle, and converted to the faith he persecuted. Observe the circumstances of the case. When the blood of Stephen was shed, Saul, then a young man, was standing by, "consenting unto his death," and "kept the raiment of them that slew him."* Two speeches are recorded of the Martyr in his last moments ; one, in which he prayed that God would pardon his murderers,—the other his witness, that he saw the heavens opened, and Jesus on God's right hand. His prayer was wonderfully answered. Stephen saw his Saviour ; the next vision of that Saviour to mortal man was vouchsafed to the very young man, even Saul, who shared in his murder and his intercession.

Strange, indeed, it was ; and what would have been St. Stephen's thoughts could he have known it ! The prayers of righteous men avail much. The first Martyr had power with God to raise up the greatest Apostle. Such was the honour put upon the first fruits of those sufferings, upon which the Church was entering. Thus from the beginning the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church. Stephen, one man, was put to death for saying that the Jewish people were to have exclusive privileges no longer ; but from his very grave rose the favoured instrument by whom the thousands and ten thousands of the Gentiles were brought to the knowledge of the Truth !

1. Herein then, first, is St. Paul's conversion memorable ; that it was a triumph over the enemy. When Almighty God would convert the world, opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, who was the chosen preacher of His mercy ? Not one of Christ's first followers. To show His power, He put forth his hand into the very midst of the persecutors of His Son, and seized upon the most strenuous among them. The prayer of a dying man is the token and occasion of his triumph

* Acts xxii. 20.

which He had reserved for Himself. His strength is made perfect in weakness. As of old, He broke the yoke of His people's burden, the staff of their shoulder, the rod of their oppressor.* Saul made furiously for Damascus, but the Lord Almighty "knew his abode, and his going out and coming in, and his rage against Him;" and "because his rage against Him, and his tumult came up before Him," therefore as in Sennacherib's case, though in a far different way, He "put His hook in his nose, and His bridle in his lips, and turned him back by the way by which he came."† "He spoiled principalities and powers, and powers, and made a show of them openly,"‡ triumphing over the serpent's head while his heel was wounded. Saul, the persecutor was converted, and preached Christ in the synagogues.

2. In the next place, St. Paul's conversion may be considered as a suitable introduction to the office he was called to execute in God's providence. I have said it was a triumph over the enemies of Christ; but it was also an expressive emblem of the nature of God's general dealings with the race of man. What are we all but rebels against God, and enemies of the Truth? what were the Gentiles in particular at that time, but "alienated" from Him, "and enemies in their mind by wicked works?"§ Who then could so appropriately fulfil the purpose of Him who came to call sinners to repentance, as one who esteemed himself the least of the Apostles, that was not meet to be called an Apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of God? When Almighty God in His infinite mercy purposed to form a people to Himself out of the heathen, as vessels for glory, first He chose the instrument of this His purpose, as a brand from the burning to be a type of the rest. There is a parallel to this order of Providence in the Old Testament. The Jews were bid to look unto the rock whence they were hewn.|| Who was the especial patriarch of their nation?—Jacob. Abraham himself, indeed, had been called and blessed by God's mere grace. Yet Abraham had remarkable faith. Jacob, however, the immediate and peculiar Patriarch of the Jewish race, is represented in the character of a sinner, pardoned and reclaimed by Divine mercy, a wanderer exalted to be the father of a great nation. Now I am not venturing to describe him as he really was, but as he is represented to us; not personally, but in that particular point of view in which the sacred history has placed him: not as an individual, but as he is typically, or in the way of doctrine. There is no mistaking the marks of his character and fortunes in the *history*, designedly (as it would seem)

* Isa. ix. 4. † Isa. xxxvii. 28, 29. ‡ Col. ii. 15. § Col. i. 21. || Isa. li. 1.

recorded to humble Jewish pride. He makes his own confession, as St. Paul afterwards; "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies."* Every year too the Israelites were bid bring their offering, and avow before God, that "a Syrian ready to perish was their father."† Such as was the father, such (it was reasonable to suppose) would be the descendants. None would be "greater than their father Jacob,"‡ for whose sake the nation was blest.

In like manner St. Paul is, in one way of viewing the Dispensation, the spiritual father of the Gentiles; and in the history of his sin and its most gracious forgiveness, he exemplifies far more than his brother Apostles his own Gospel; that we are all guilty before God, and can be saved only by His free bounty. In his own words, "for this cause obtained he mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all *long-suffering for a pattern* to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."§

3. And, in the next place, St. Paul's previous course of life rendered him, perhaps, after his conversion, more fit an instrument of God's purposes towards the Gentiles, as well as a more striking specimen of it. Here it is necessary to speak with caution. We know that, whatever were St. Paul's successes in the propagation of the Gospel, they were in their source and nature not his, but through "the grace of God which was with him." Still, God makes use of human means, and it is allowable to inquire reverently what these were, and why St. Paul was employed to convert the Heathen world rather than St. James the Less, or St. John. Doubtless his intellectual endowments and acquirements were among the circumstances which fitted him for his office. Yet, may it not be supposed that there was something in his previous religious history, which especially disciplined him to be "all things to all men?" Nothing is so difficult as to enter into the characters and feelings of men who have been brought up under a system of religion different from our own; and to discern how they may be most forcibly and profitably addressed, in order to win them over to the reception of Divine truths, of which they are at present ignorant. Now St. Paul had had experience in his own case, of a state of mind very different from that which belonged to him as an Apostle. Though he had never been polluted with Heathen immorality and profaneness, he had entertained views and sentiments very far from Christian; and had experienced a conversion to which the other Apostles (as far as we know) were strangers. I am far indeed from meaning that there is aught favourable to a man's after religion in an actual unsettling of principle, in lapsing into

* Gen. xxxii. 10. † Deut. xxvi. 5. ‡ John iv. 12. § 1 Tim. i. 16.

infidelity, and then returning again to religious belief. This was not St. Paul's case; *he* underwent no radical change of religious principle. Much less would I give countenance to the notion, that a previous immoral life is other than a grievous permanent hindrance and a curse to a man, after he has turned to God. Such considerations, however, are out of place, in speaking of St. Paul. What I mean is, that his awful rashness and blindness, his self-confident, headstrong, cruel rage, against the worshippers of the true Messiah, then his strange conversion, then the length of time that elapsed before his solemn ordination, during which he was left to meditate in private on all that had happened, and to anticipate the future; all this constituted a peculiar preparation for the office of preaching to a lost world, dead in sin. It gave him an extended insight, on the one hand, into the ways and designs of Providence, and, on the other hand, into the workings of sin in the human heart, and the various modes of thinking to which the mind may be trained. It taught him not to despair of the worst sinners, to be sharp-sighted in detecting the sparks of faith, amid corrupt habits of life, and to enter into the various temptations to which human nature is exposed. It wrought in him a profound humility, which disposed him (if we may say so) to bear meekly the abundance of the revelations given him; and it imparted to him a practical wisdom how to apply them to the conversion of others, so as to be weak with the weak, and strong with the strong, to bear their burdens, to instruct and encourage them, to "strengthen his brethren," to rejoice and weep with them, in a word, to be an earthly *Paraclete*, the comforter, help, and guide of his brethren. It gave him to know in some good measure the *hearts of men*; an attribute (in its fulness) belonging to God alone, and possessed by Him in union with perfect purity from all sin; but which in us can scarcely exist without our own melancholy experience, in some degree, of moral evil in ourselves, since the innocent (it is their privilege) have not eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

4. Lastly, to guard against misconception of these last remarks, I must speak distinctly on a part of the subject only touched upon hitherto, viz. on St. Paul's spiritual state before his conversion. For, in spite of what has been said by way of caution, perhaps I may still be supposed to warrant the maxim sometimes maintained, that the greater sinner makes the greater saint.

Now, observe, I do not allege that St. Paul's previous sins made him a more spiritual Christian afterwards, but rendered him *more fitted for a particular purpose* in God's providence,—more fitted, when converted, to reclaim others; just as a knowledge of languages (whether divinely or humanly acquired) fits a man for the office of missionary, without

tending in any degree to make him a better man. I merely say, that if we take two men *equally* advanced in faith and holiness, that one of the two would preach to a variety of men with the greater success, who had the greater experience in his own religious history of temptation, the war of flesh and spirit, sin, and victory over sin; though, at the same time, at first sight it is of course unlikely that he who had experienced all these changes of mind *should* be equal in faith and obedience to the other who had served God from a child.

But, in the next place, let us observe, how very far St. Paul's conversion is, in matter of fact, from holding out any encouragement to those who live in sin, or any self-satisfaction, to those who have lived in it; as if their present or former disobedience could be a gain to them.

Why was mercy shown to Saul the persecutor? he himself gives us the reason, which we may safely make use of. "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."* And why was he "enabled" to preach the Gospel? "Because Christ counted him faithful." We have here the reason more clearly stated even than in Abraham's case, who was honoured with special Divine revelations, and promised a name on the earth, because God "knew him that he would command his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."† Saul was ever faithful, according to his notion of "the way of the Lord." Doubtless he sinned deeply and grievously in persecuting the followers of Christ. Had he known the Holy Scriptures, he never would have done so; he would have recognized Jesus to be the promised Saviour, as Simeon and Anna had, from the first. But he was bred up in a human school, and paid more attention to the writings of men than to the word of God. Still, observe, he differed from other enemies of Christ in this, that he kept a clear conscience, and habitually obeyed God according to his knowledge. God speaks to us in two ways, in our hearts and in his word. The latter and clearer of these informants St. Paul knew little of; the former he could not but know in his measure, (for it was within him,) and he obeyed it. That inward voice was but feeble, mixed up and obscured with human feelings and human traditions; so that what his conscience told him to do, was but partially true, and in part was wrong. Yet still, believing it to speak God's will, he deferred to it, acting as he did afterwards when he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," which informed him Jesus was the Christ.‡ Hear his own account of himself:—"I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." "Touching the

* 1 Tim. i. 12, 13.

† Gen. xviii. 19.

‡ Acts xxvi. 19.

righteousness which is in the Law, blameless,"* Here is no *case*, no self-indulgent habits, no wilful sin against the light,—nay, I will say no pride. That is, though he was doubtless influenced by much sinful self-confidence, in his violent and bigoted hatred of the Christians, and though (as well as even the best of us) he was doubtless liable to the occasional temptations and defilements of pride, yet, taking pride to mean open rebellion against God, warring against God's authority, setting up reason against God, this he had not. He "verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Turn to the case of Jews and Gentiles who remained unconverted, and you will see the difference between them and him. Think of the hypocritical Pharisees, who professed to be saints, and were sinners; "full of extortion, excess, and uncleanness;"† believing Jesus to be the Christ, but not confessing Him, as "loving the praise of men more than the praise of God."‡ St. Paul himself gives us an account of them in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Can it be made to apply to his own previous state? Was the name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles through him? On the other hand, the Gentile reasoners sought a vain wisdom.§ These were they who despised religion and practical morality as common matters, unworthy the occupation of a refined and cultivated intellect. "Some mocked, others said, We will hear thee again of this matter."§ They prided themselves on being above vulgar prejudices,—in being indifferent to the traditions afloat in the world about another life,—in regarding all religions as equally true and equally false. Such a hard, vain-glorious temper our Lord solemnly condemns, when he says to the Church at Laodicea, "I would thou wert cold or hot."

The Pharisees, then, were breakers of the Law; the Gentile reasoners and statesmen were infidels. Both were proud, both despised the voice of conscience. We see, then, from this review, the kind of sin which God pities and pardons. All sin, indeed, when repented of, He will put away; but pride hardens the heart against repentance, and sensuality debases it to a brutal nature. The Holy Spirit is quenched by open transgressions of conscience and contempt of His authority. But, when men err in ignorance, following closely their own notions of right and wrong, though these notions are mistaken,—great as is their sin, if they might have possessed themselves of truer notions,—(and very great as was St. Paul's sin, because he certainly might have learned from the Old Testament far clearer and diviner doctrine than the tradition of the

* Acts xxiii. 1, xxvi. 5; Phil. iii. 6.

† Matt. xxiii. 25. 27.

‡ John xii. 43.

§ 1 Cor. i. 22.

§ Acts xvii. 32.

Pharisees,) yet such men are not left by the God of all grace. God leads them on to the light, in spite of their errors in faith, if they continue strictly to obey what they believe to be His will. And, to declare this comfortable truth to us, St. Paul was thus carried on by the Providence of God, and brought into the light by miracle; that we may learn, by a memorable instance of His grace, what He ever does, though He does not in ordinary cases thus declare it openly to the world.

Who has not felt a fear lest he be wandering from the true doctrine of Christ? Let him cherish and obey the holy light of conscience within him, as Saul did; let him carefully study the Scriptures, as Saul did not; and the God who had mercy even on the persecutor of His saints, will assuredly shed His grace upon him, and bring him into the truth as it is in Jesus.

SERMON X.

THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

SECRECY AND SUDDENNESS OF DIVINE VISITATIONS.

LUKE xviii. 20.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

WE commemorate on this day the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, according to the injunction of the Mosaic Law, as laid down in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Exodus and the twelfth of Leviticus. When the Israelites were brought out of Egypt, the first-born of the Egyptians (as we all know) were visited by death, "from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle."* Accordingly, in thankful remembrance of this destruction, and their own deliverance, every male among the Israelites, who was the first-born of his mother, was dedicated to God; likewise, every first-born of cattle.} Afterwards,

* Exod. xii. 29.

the Levites were taken, as God's peculiar possession, instead of the first-born :* but still the first-born were solemnly brought to the Temple at a certain time from their birth, presented to God, and then redeemed or bought off at a certain price. At the same time certain sacrifices were offered for the mother, in order to her purification after child-birth ; and therefore to-day's Feast, in memory of Christ's Presentation in the Temple, is commonly called the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Our Saviour was born without sin. His Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, need have made no offering, as requiring no purification. On the contrary, it was that very birth of the Son of God which sanctified the whole race of woman, and turned her curse into a blessing. Nevertheless, as Christ Himself was minded to "fulfil all righteousness," to obey all the ordinances of the covenant under which He was born, so in like manner his Mother Mary submitted to the Law, in order to do it reverence.

This then is the event in our Saviour's infancy, which we this day celebrate ; His presentation in the Temple, when His Virgin Mother was ceremonially purified. It was made memorable at the time by the hymns and praises of Simeon and Anna, to whom He was then revealed. And there were others, besides these, who had been "looking for redemption in Jerusalem," who were also vouchsafed a sight of the Infant Saviour. But the chief importance of this event consists in its being a fulfilment of prophecy. Malachi had announced the Lord's visitation of His Temple in these words, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His Temple ;"† words which, though variously fulfilled during His Ministry, had their first accomplishment in the humble ceremony commemorated on this day. And, when we consider the grandeur of the prediction, and how unostentatious this accomplishment was, we are led to muse upon God's ways, and to draw useful lessons for ourselves. This is the reflection which I propose to make upon the subject of this Festival.

I say, we are to-day reminded of the noiseless course of God's providence, His tranquil accomplishment, in the course of nature, of great events long designed ; and again, the suddenness and stillness of His visitations. Consider what the occurrence in question consists in. A little child is brought to the Temple, as all first-born children were brought. There is nothing here uncommon or striking, so far. His parents are with him, poor people, bringing the offering of pigeons or doves, for the purification of the mother. They are met in the Temple by an old man, who takes the child in his arms, offers a thanksgiving to

* Numb. iii. 12, 13.

† Mal. iii. 1.

God, and blesses the parents ; and next are joined by a woman of a great age, a widow of eighty-four years, who had exceeded the time of useful service, and seemed to be but a fit prey for death. She gives thanks also, and speaks concerning the child to other persons who are present. Then all retire.

Now, there is evidently nothing great or impressive in this : nothing to excite the feelings, or interest the imagination. We know what the world thinks of such a group as I have described. The weak and helpless, whether from age or infancy, it looks upon negligently and passes by. Yet all this that happened was really the solemn fulfilment of an ancient and emphatic prophecy. The infant in arms was the Saviour of the world, the rightful heir, come in disguise of a stranger to visit His own house. The Scripture had said, "The Lord whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, but who may abide the day of his coming, and who may stand when he appeareth ?" He had now taken possession. And further, the old man, who took the child in his arms, had upon him gifts of the Holy Ghost, had been promised the blessed sight of his Lord before his death, came into the Temple by heavenly guidance, and now had within him thoughts unutterable, of joy, thankfulness, and hope, strangely mixed with awe, fear, painful wonder, and "bitterness of spirit." Anna too, the woman of fourscore and four years, was a prophetess ; and the bystanders, to whom she spoke, were the true Israel, who were looking out in faith for the predicted redemption of mankind, those who (in the words of the prophecy,) "sought" and in prospect "delighted" in the "Messenger" of God's covenant of mercy. "The glory of this latter House shall be greater than of the former,"* was the announcement of another prophecy. Behold the glory ; a little child and his parents, two aged persons, and a congregation without name or memorial. "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

Such has ever been the manner of His visitations, in the destruction of His enemies as well as in the deliverance of His own people ;—silent, sudden, unforeseen, as regards the world, though predicted in the face of all men, and in their measure comprehended and waited for by His true Church. Such a visitation was the flood ; Noah, a preacher of righteousness, but the multitude of sinners judicially blinded. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." Such was the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Likewise as it was in the days of Lot ; they did eat ; they drank,

* Hagg. ii. 9.

they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them all;”* Again, “The horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea; and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them.”† The overthrow of Sennacherib was also silent and sudden, when his vast army least expected it; “The Angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand.”‡ Belshazzar and Babylon were surprised in the midst of the king’s great feast to his thousand lords. While Nebuchadnezzar boasted, his reason was suddenly taken from him. While the multitude shouted with impious flattery at Herod’s speech, then “the Angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory.”§ Whether we take the first or the final judgment upon Jerusalem, both visitations were foretold as sudden. Of the former, Isaiah had declared it should come “*suddenly*, at an instant;”|| of the latter, Malachi, “The Lord whom ye seek shall *suddenly* come to his Temple.” And such too will be His final visitation of the whole earth: men will be at their work in the city and in the field, and it will overtake them like a thunder-cloud. “Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.”¶

And it is impossible that it should be otherwise, in spite of warnings ever so clear, considering how the world goes on in every age. Men, who are plunged in the pursuits of active life, are no judges of its course and tendency on the whole. They confuse great events with little, and measure the importance of objects as in perspective by the mere standard of nearness or remoteness. It is only at a distance that one can take in the outlines and features of a whole country. It is but holy Daniel, solitary among princes, or Elijah the recluse of Mount Carmel, who can withstand Baal, or forecast the time of God’s providences among the nations. To the multitude all things continue to the end, as they were from the beginning of the creation. The business of state affairs, the movements of society, the course of nature, proceed as ever, till the moment of Christ’s coming. “The sun was risen upon the earth,” bright as usual, on that very day of wrath in which Sodom was destroyed. Men cannot believe their own time is an especially wicked time; for, with Scripture unstudied and hearts untrained in holiness, they have no standard to compare it with. They take warning from no troubles, or perplexities; which rather carry

* Luke xvii. 27—29.

§ Acts. xii. 23.

† Exod. xv. 19.

|| Is. xxx. 13.

‡ Is. xxxvii. 36.

¶ Luke xvii. 35, 36.

them away to search out the earthly causes of them, and the possible remedies. They consider them as conditions of this world, necessary results of this or that state of society. When the power of Assyria became great, (we might suppose) the Jews had a plain call to repentance. Far from it; they were led to set power against power, they took refuge against Assyria in Egypt their old enemy. Probably they reasoned themselves into what they considered a temperate, enlightened, cheerful view of national affairs; perhaps they might consider the growth of Assyria as an advantage rather than otherwise, as balancing the power of Egypt, and so tending to their own security. Certain it is, we find them connecting themselves first with one kingdom, and then with the other, as men who could read (as they thought) "the signs of the times," and made some pretences to political wisdom. Thus the world proceeds till wrath comes upon it and there is no escape. "To-morrow," they say, "Shall be as this day, and much more abundant."*

And in the midst of this their revel, whether of sensual pleasure, or of ambition, or of covetousness, or of pride and self-esteem, the decree goes forth to destroy. The decree goes forth in secret; Angels hear it, and the favoured few on earth; but no public event takes place to give the world warning. The earth was doomed to the flood one hundred and twenty years before the "decree brought forth,"† or men heard of it. The waters of Babylon had been turned, and the conqueror was marching into the city, when Belshazzar made his great feast. Pride infatuates man, and self-indulgence and luxury work their way unseen,—like some smouldering fire, which for a while leaves the outward form of things unaltered. At length the decayed mass cannot hold together, and breaks by its own weight, or on some slight and accidental external violence. As the Prophet says; "This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out (or bulging) in a high wall, whose breaking cometh *suddenly at an instant*." The same inward corruption of a nation seems to be meant in our Lord's words, when He says of Jerusalem; "Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."‡

Thoughts, such as the foregoing, are profitable at all times; for in every age the world is profane and blind, and God hides His Providence, yet carries it forward. But they are peculiarly apposite now, in proportion as the present day bears upon it more marks than usual of pride and judicial blindness. Whether Christ is at our doors or not, but a few men in England may have grace enough safely to conjecture but that He is calling upon us all to prepare as for His coming, is most

* Is. lvi. 12.

† Zeph. ii. 2.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 28.

evident to those who have religious eyes and ears. Let us then turn this Festival to account, by taking it as the Memorial-day of His visitations. Let us from the events it celebrates, lay up deep in our hearts the recollection, how mysteriously little things are in this world connected with great, how single moments, improved or wasted, are the salvation or ruin of all-important interests. Let us bear the thought upon us, when we come to worship in God's House, that any such season of service may, for what we know, be wonderfully connected with some ancient purpose of His, announced before we were born, and have its determinate bearing on our eternal welfare; let us fear to miss the Saviour, while Simeon and Anna find Him. Let us remember that He was not manifested again in the Temple, except once, for thirty years, while a whole generation, who were alive at His first visitation, died off in the interval. Let us carry this thought into our daily conduct; considering that, for what we know, our hope of salvation may in the event materially depend on our avoiding this or that momentary sin. And further, from the occurrences of this day, let us take comfort, when we despond about the state of the Church. Perhaps we see not God's tokens; we see neither prophet nor teacher remaining to His people; darkness falls over the earth, and no protesting voice is heard. Yet, granting things to be at the very worst, yet when Christ was presented in the Temple, the age knew as little of it, as it knows of His Providence now. Rather, the worse our condition is, the nearer to us is the Advent of our Deliverer. Even though He is silent, doubt not that His army is on the march towards us. He is coming through the sky, and has even now His camp upon the outskirts of our own world. Nay, though He still for a while keep His seat at His Father's right hand, yet surely He sees all that is going on, and waits and will not fail His hour of vengeance. Shall He not hear His own elect, when they cry day and night to Him? His services of prayer and praise continue, and are scorned by the multitude. Day by day, Festival by Festival, Fast after Fast, Season by Season, they continue according to His ordinance and are scorned. But the greater His delay, the heavier will be His vengeance, and the more complete the deliverance of His people.

May the good Lord save His Church, in this her hour of peril; when Satan seeks to sap and corrupt where he dare not openly assault! May He raise up instruments of His grace, "not ignorant" of the devices of the Evil One, with seeming eyes, and strong hearts, and vigorous arms to defend the treasure of the faith once committed to the Saints, and to rouse and alarm their slumbering brethren! "For Sion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until

the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth . . . Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth . . . Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones, lift up the standard for the people.* Thus does Almighty God address His "watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem;" and to the Church herself He says, to our great comfort: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord."†

SERMON XI.

THE FEAST OF ST. MATTHIAS, THE APOSTLE.

DIVINE DECREES.

REV. iii. 11.

Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

THIS is the only Saint's-day which is to be celebrated with mingled feelings of joy and pain. It records the fall, as well as the election of an Apostle. St. Matthias was chosen in the place of the traitor Judas. In the history of the latter we have the warning recorded in very deed which our Lord in the next gives us in word, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And doubtless many were the warnings such as this, addressed by our Lord to the wretched man who in the end betrayed him. Not only did He call him to reflection and repentance by the hints which He let drop concerning Him during the Last Supper, but in the discourses previous to it, He may be supposed to have intended a reference to the circumstances of His apostate disciple. "Watch ye, therefore," He said, "lest coming suddenly, He

* Isa. lxii. 1. 6, 7. 10.

† Isa. liv. 17.

find you sleeping.”—I called Judas just now *wretched*; for we must not speak of sinners according to the falsely-charitable way of some, styling them *unfortunate* instead of wicked, lest we thus learn to excuse sin in ourselves. He was doubtless *inexcusable*, as we shall be, if we follow his pattern; and he must be viewed, not with pity, but with fear and awe.

The reflection which rises in the mind on a consideration of the election of St. Matthias, is this; how easily God may effect His purposes without us, and put others in our place, if we are disobedient to Him. It often happens that those who have long been in His favour grow secure and presuming. They think their salvation certain, and their service necessary to Him who has graciously accepted it. They consider themselves as personally bound up with His purposes of mercy manifested in the Church; and so marked out, that, if they could fall, His word would fail. They come to think they have some peculiar title or interest in His promises, over and above other men, (however derived, it matters not, whether from His eternal decree, or on the other hand from their own especial holiness and obedience,) but practically such an interest, that the very supposition that they can possibly fall offends them. Now this feeling of self-importance is repressed all through the Scriptures, and especially by the events we commemorate to-day. Let us consider this subject.

Eliphaz the Temanite thus answers Job, who in his distress showed infirmity, and grew impatient of God's correction. “Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?”* And the course of His providence as recorded in Scripture, will show us, that, in dealing with us His rational creatures, He goes by no unconditional rule, which makes us absolutely His from the first; but, as He is “no respecter of persons,” so on the other hand righteousness and judgment are the basis of His throne; and that whoso rebels, whether Archangel or Apostle, at once forfeits His favour; and this, even for the sake of those who do not rebel.

Not long before the fall and treachery of Judas, Christ pronounced a blessing, as it seemed, upon all the twelve Apostles, the traitor included. “Ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”† Who would not have thought from this promise, taken by itself, and without reference to the

* Job xxii. 2, 3.

† Matt. xix. 28.

Eternal Rule of God's government, which is always understood, even when not formally enunciated, that Judas was sure of eternal life? It is true our Saviour added, as if with an allusion to him, "many that are first shall be last;" yet He said nothing to undeceive such as might refuse to consult and apply the fundamental law of His impartial Providence. All His twelve Apostles seemed from the letter of His words, to be predestined to life; nevertheless, in a few months, Matthias held the throne and crown of one of them. And there is something remarkable in the circumstance itself, that our Lord *should* have made up their number to a full twelve, after one had fallen; and, perhaps, there may be contained in it some symbolical allusion to the scope of His decrees, which we cannot altogether enter into. Surely, had He willed it, eleven would have accomplished His purpose as well as twelve. Why, when one had fallen, should He accurately fill up the perfect number? Yet, not only in the case of the Apostles, but in that of the tribes of Israel also, if He rejects one, He divides another into two.* Why is this, but to show us, as it would appear, that in this election of us, He does not look at us as mere *individuals*, but as a body, as a certain definite whole, of which the parts may alter in the process of disengaging it from this sinful world,—with reference to some glorious and harmonious design beyond us, who are the immediate objects of His bounty, and shall be the fruit of His love, if we are faithful? Why, but to show us, that He could even find other Apostles to suffer for Him,—and much more, servants to fill His lower thrones, should we be wanting, and transgress His strict and holy law?

This is but one instance out of many, in the revealed history of His moral government. He was on the point of exemplifying the same Rule in the case of the Israelites, when Moses stayed His hand. God purposed to consume them, when they rebelled, and instead to make of Moses' seed a great nation. This happened twice.† The second time, God declared what was His end in view in fulfilling which the Israelites were but his instruments. "I have pardoned according to thy word; but as truly as I live, *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*" Again, on the former occasion, He gave the Rule of His dealings with them. Moses wished for the sake of his people to be himself excluded from the land of promise; "If thou wilt forgive their sin;—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, *Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.*" So clearly has he

* Rev. vii. † Exod. xxxii 32, 33. Numb. xiv. 20, 21.

shown us from the beginning, that His own glory is the *End*, and justice the essential *Rule* of His Providence.

Again, Saul has chosen and thought himself secure. His conduct evinced the self-will of an independent monarch, instead of one who felt himself to be a mere instrument of God's purposes, a minister of his glory, under the obligation of a law of right and wrong, and strong only as wielded by Him who formed him. So, when he sinned, Samuel said to him, "Thou hast done foolishly, thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God. . . . for *now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart.*"* And again, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou."†

In like manner, Christ also, convicting the Jews out of their own mouth; "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will *let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen*, which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons."‡ Consider how striking an instance the Jews formed when the Gospel was offered them, of the general Rule which I am pointing out. They were rejected. How hard they thought it, St. Paul's Epistles show. They did not shrink from declaring, that if Jesus were the Christ, and the Gentiles made equal with them, God's promise was broken; and you may imagine how forcibly they might have pleaded the prophecies of the Old Testament, which seemed irreversibly to assign honour and power (not to say *temporal* honour and power,) to the Israelites *by name*. Alas! they did not seek out and use the one clue given them for their religious course, amid all the mysteries both of Scripture and the world,—the one solemn *Rule* of God's dealings with His creatures. They did not listen for that small still voice, running under all His dispensations, most clear to those who would listen, amid all the intricacies of His Providence and His promises. Impressed though it be upon the heart by nature, and ever insisted on in Revelation, as the basis on which God has established all his decrees, it was to them a hard saying. St. Paul retorts it on their consciences, when they complained. "God (he says) will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; *but* unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath;—tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth

* 1 Sam. xiii. 13, 14.

† 1 Sam. xv. 28.

‡ Matt. xxi. 41.

evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. *For there is no respect of persons with God.*"*

Such was the unchangeable Rule of God's government, as it is propounded by St. Paul in explanation of the Jewish election, and significantly prefixed to his discourse upon the Christian. Such as was the Mosaic, such also is the Gospel Covenant, made without respect of persons ; rich, indeed, in privilege and promise far above the Elder Dispensation, but bearing on its front the same original avowal of impartial retribution,—“peace to every man that worketh good,” “wrath to the disobedient ;” predestining to glory, characters not persons, pledging the gift of perseverance not to individuals, but to a body of which the separate members might change. This is the doctrine set before us by that Apostle, to whom was revealed in an extraordinary way the nature of the Christian Covenant, its peculiar blessedness, gifts and promises. The New Covenant was, so far, not unlike the Old, as some reasoners in these days would maintain.

We are vouchsafed a further witness to it, in the favoured Evangelist, who finally closed and perfected the volume of God's revelations, after the death of his brethren. “Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be . . . Blessed are they that do His commandments, *that they may have right* to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”†

And a third witness that the Christian Election is like the Jewish, conditional, is our Lord's own declaration, which He left behind Him with His Apostles when He was leaving the world, as recorded by the same Evangelist. “If a man *abide not in Me*,” He said, “he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” And, lest restless and reluctant minds should shelter their opposition to this solemn declaration under some supposed obscurity in the expression of “abiding in Him,” and say that none abide in Him, but the predestined, He adds, for the removal of all doubt, “*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.*”‡

Lastly, in order to complete the solemn promulgation of His eternal Rule, He exemplified it, while he spoke it, in the instance of an Apostle. He knew whom He had chosen ; that they were “not all clean,” that “one of them was a devil ;” yet He chose all twelve, as if to show that souls chosen for eternal life might fall away. Thus, in the case of the Apostles themselves, in the very foundation of His Church,

* Rom. ii. 6—11.

† Rev. xxii. 12, 14.

‡ John xv. 16.

He laid deep the serious and merciful warning, if we have wisdom to lay it to heart ; “ Be not high-minded, but fear ;” for, if God spared not Apostles, neither will He spare thee !

What solemn overpowering thoughts must have crowded on St. Matthias, when he received the greetings of the eleven Apostles, and took his seat among them as their brother ! His very election was a witness against himself, if he did not fulfil it. And such surely will ours be in our degree. We take the place of others who have gone before, as Matthias did ; we are “ baptized for the dead,” filling up the ranks of soldiers, some of whom, indeed, have fought a good fight, but many of whom in every age have made void their calling. Many are called, few are chosen. The monuments of sin and unbelief are set up around us. The casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the Gentiles. The fall of one nation is the conversion of another. The Church loses old branches, and gains new. God works according to His own inscrutable pleasure ; He has left the East, and manifested Himself Westward. Thus the Christian of every age is but the successor of the lost and of the dead. How long we of this country shall be put in trust with the Gospel, we know not ; but while we have the privilege, assuredly we do but stand in the place of Christians who have either utterly fallen away or are so corrupted, as scarcely to let their light shine before men. We are at present witnesses of the Truth ; and our very glory is our warning. By the superstitions, the profanities, the indifference, the unbelief of the world called Christian, we are called upon to be lowly-minded while we preach aloud, and to tremble while we rejoice. Let us then, as a Church and as individuals, one and all, look to Him who alone can keep us from falling. Let us with single heart look up to Christ our Saviour, and put ourselves into His hands, from whom all our strength and wisdom is derived. Let us avoid the beginnings of temptation ; let us watch and pray lest we enter into it. Avoiding all speculations which are above us, let us follow what tends to edifying. Let us receive into our hearts the great truth, that we who have been freely accepted and sanctified as members of Christ, shall hereafter be judged by our works, done in and through Him ; that the Sacraments unite us to Him, and that faith makes the Sacraments open their hidden virtue, and flow forth in pardon and grace. Beyond this we may not inquire. How it is one man perseveres and another falls, what are the exact limits and character of our natural corruption, —these are over-subtle questions ; while we know for certain, that though we can do nothing of ourselves, yet that salvation is in our own power, for however deep and far-spreading is the root of evil in us, God’s grace will be sufficient for our need.

SERMON XII.

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

THE REVERENCE DUE TO HER.

LUKE i. 48.

From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

TO-DAY we celebrate the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary; when the Angel Gabriel was sent to tell her that she was to be the Mother of our Lord, and when the Holy Ghost came upon her, and overshadowed her with the power of the Highest. In that great event was fulfilled her anticipation as expressed in the text. All generations have called her blessed.* The Angel began the salutation; he said, "Hail, thou that art highly-favoured; the Lord is with thee; blessed† art thou among women." Again he said, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God; and behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest." Her cousin Elizabeth was the next to greet her with her appropriate title. Though she was filled with the Holy Ghost at the time she spake, yet, far from thinking herself by such a gift equalled to Mary, she was thereby moved to use the lowlier and more reverent language. "She spake out with a loud voice, and said, *Blessed art thou* among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" . . . Then she repeated, "Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." Then it was that Mary gave utterance to her feelings in the Hymn which we read in the Evening Service. How many and complicated must they have been! In her was now to be fulfilled that promise which the world had been looking out for during thousands of

* μακαρισμένη.

† εὐλογημένη.

years. The Seed of the woman, announced to guilty Eve, after so long delay, was at length appearing upon earth, and was to be born of her. In her the destinies of the world were to be reversed, and the serpent's head bruised. On her was bestowed the greatest honour ever put upon any individual of our fallen race. God was taking upon Him her flesh, and humbling Himself to be called her offspring;—such is the deep mystery! She of course would feel her own inexpressible unworthiness; and again, her humble lot, her ignorance, her weakness in the eyes of the world. And she had moreover, we may well suppose, that purity and innocence of heart, that bright vision of faith, that confiding trust in her God, which raised all these feelings to an intensity which we, ordinary mortals, cannot understand. *We* cannot understand them; we repeat her hymn day after day,—yet consider for an instant in how different a mode *we* say it from that in which she at the first uttered it. *We* even hurry it over, and do not think of the meaning of those words which came from the most highly favoured, awfully gifted of the children of men. “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of His hand-maiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.”

Now let us consider in what respects the Virgin Mary is Blessed; a title first given her by the Angel, and next by the Church in all ages since to this day.

1. I observe, that in her the curse pronounced on Eve, was changed to a blessing. Eve was doomed to bear children in sorrow; but now this very dispensation, in which the token of Divine anger was conveyed, was made the means by which salvation came into the world. Christ might have descended from heaven, as He went, and as He will come again. He might have taken on Him a body from the ground, as Adam was taken; or been formed, like Eve, in some other divinely devised way. But, far from this, God sent forth His Son (as St. Paul says,) “made of a woman.” For it has been His gracious purpose to turn *all* that is ours from evil to good. Had He so pleased, He might have found, when we sinned, other beings to do Him service, casting us into hell; but He purposed to save and to change *us*. And in like manner all that belongs to us, our reason, our affections, our pursuits, our relations in life, He needs nothing put aside in His disciples, but all sanctified. Therefore, instead of sending His Son from heaven, He sent Him forth as the Son of Mary, to show that all our sorrow and all our corruption can be blessed and changed by Him. The very punish-

ment of the fall, the very taint of birth-sin, admits of a cure by the coming of Christ.

2. But there is another portion of the original punishment of woman, which may be considered as repealed when Christ came. It was said to the woman, "Thy husband shall rule over thee;" a sentence which has been strikingly fulfilled. Man has strength to conquer the thorns and thistles which the earth is cursed with, but the same strength has ever proved the fulfilment of the punishment awarded to the woman. Look abroad through the Heathen world, and see how the weaker half of mankind has every where been tyrannized over and debased by the strong arm of force. Consider all those eastern nations, which have never at any time revered it, but have heartlessly made it the slave of every bad and cruel purpose. Thus the serpent has triumphed,—making the man still degrade himself by her who originally tempted him, and her, who then tempted, now suffer from him who was seduced. Nay, even under the light of revelation, the punishment on the woman was not removed at once. Still, (in the words of the curse,) her husband ruled over her. The very practice of polygamy and divorce, which was suffered under the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, proves it.

But when Christ came as the seed of the woman, He vindicated the rights and honour of His Mother. Not that the distinction of ranks is destroyed under the Gospel; the woman is still made inferior to the man, as he to Christ; but the slavery is done away with. St. Peter bids the husband "give honour unto the wife, *because* the weaker, in that both are heirs of the grace of life."* And St. Paul, while enjoining subjection upon her, speaks of the especial blessedness vouchsafed her in being the appointed entrance of the Saviour into the world. "Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." But, "notwithstanding, she shall be saved through the Child-bearing,"† that is, through the birth of Christ from Mary, which was a blessing, as upon all mankind, so peculiarly upon the woman. Accordingly, from that time, Marriage has not only been restored to its original dignity, but even gifted with a spiritual privilege, as the outward symbol of the heavenly union subsisting betwixt Christ and His Church.

Thus has the Blessed Virgin, in bearing our Lord, taken off or lightened the peculiar disgrace which the woman inherited for seducing Adam, sanctifying the one part of it, repealing the other.

3. But further, she is doubtless to be accounted blessed and favoured

* 1 Pet. iii. 7.

† 1 Tim. ii. 15.

in herself, as well as in the benefits she has done us. Who can estimate the holiness and perfection of her, who was chosen to be the Mother of Christ? If to him that hath, more is given, and holiness and divine favour go together, (and this we are expressly told,) what must have been the transcendent purity of her, whom the Creator Spirit condescended to overshadow with His miraculous presence? What must have been her gifts, who was chosen to be the only near earthly relative of the Son of God, the only one whom He was bound by nature to revere and look up to; the one appointed to train and educate Him, to instruct Him day by day, as He grew in wisdom and in stature? This contemplation runs to a higher subject, did we dare follow it; for what, think you, was the sanctified state of that human nature, of which God formed His sinless Son; knowing, as we do, "that what is born of the flesh, is flesh;" and that "none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"*

Now, after dwelling on thoughts such as these when we turn back again to the Gospels, I think every one must feel some surprise, that we are not told more about the Blessed Virgin, than we find there. After the circumstances of Christ's birth and infancy, we hear little of her. Little is said in praise of her. She is mentioned as attending Christ to the cross, and there committed by Him to St. John's keeping; and she is mentioned as continuing with the Apostles in prayer after His ascension; and then we hear no more of her. But here again in this silence we find instruction, as much as in the mention of her.

1. It suggests to us that Scripture was written, not to exalt this or that particular Saint, but to give glory to Almighty God. There have been thousands of holy souls in the times of which the Bible history treats, whom we know nothing of, because their lives did not fall upon the line of God's public dealings with man. In Scripture we read, not of all the good men who ever were, only of a few, viz. those in whom God's name was especially honoured. Doubtless there have been many widows in Israel, serving God in fastings and prayers, like Anna; but she only is mentioned in Scripture, as being in a situation to glorify the Lord Jesus. She spoke of the Infant Saviour "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Nay, for what we know, faith like Abraham's and zeal like David's have burned in the breasts of thousands whose names have no memorial; because (I say,) Scripture is written to show us the course of God's great and marvellous Providence, and we hear of those Saints only who were the instruments of His purposes, as either introducing or preaching His Son. Christ's

* 1 John iii. 6. Job xiv. 4.

favoured apostle was St. John, His personal friend ; yet how little do we know of St. John compared with St. Paul ;—and why ? because St. Paul was the more illustrious propagator and dispenser of His Truth. As St. Paul himself said, that he “knew no man after the flesh,”* so His Saviour, with somewhat a similar meaning, has hid from us the knowledge of His more sacred and familiar feelings, His feelings towards His Mother and His friend. These were not to be exposed, as unfit for the world to know,—as dangerous, because not admitting of being known, without a risk lest the honour which those Saints received through grace, should eclipse in our minds the honour of Him who honoured them. Had the Blessed Mary been more fully disclosed to us in the heavenly beauty and sweetness of the spirit within her, true, *she* would have been honoured, *her* gifts would have been clearly seen ; but, at the same time, the Giver would have been somewhat less contemplated, because no design or work of His would have been disclosed in her history. She would have seemingly been introduced for *her* sake, not for His sake. When a Saint is seen working *towards* an end appointed by God, we *see* him to be a mere instrument, a servant though a favoured one ; and, though we admire him, yet, after all, we glorify God in him. We pass on *from* him to the work to which he ministers. But, when any one is introduced, full of gifts, yet without visible and immediate subserviency to God’s designs, such a one seems revealed for his own sake. We should rest, perchance, in the thought of him, and think of the creature more than the Creator. Thus it is a dangerous thing, it is too high a privilege, for sinners like ourselves, to know the best and innermost thoughts of God’s servants. We cannot bear to see such men in their own place, in the retirement of private life, and the calmness of hope and joy. The higher their gifts, the less fitted they are for being seen. Even St. John the Apostle, was twice tempted to fall down in worship before an Angel who showed him the things to come. And, if he who had seen the Son of God was thus overcome by the creature, how is it possible we could bear to gaze upon the creature’s holiness in its fulness, especially as we should be more able to enter into it, and estimate it, than to comprehend the infinite perfections of the Eternal Godhead ? Therefore, many truths are, like the “things which the seven thunders uttered,”† “sealed up” from us. In particular, it is in mercy to us that so little is revealed about the Blessed Virgin, in mercy to our weakness, though of her there are “many things to say,” yet they are “hard to be uttered, seeing we are dull of hearing.”‡

* 2 Cor. v. 16.

† Rev. x. 4.

‡ Heb. v. 11.

2. But, further, the more we consider who St. Mary was, the more dangerous will such knowledge of her appear to be. Other saints are but influenced or inspired by Christ, and made partakers of Him mystically. But, as to St. Mary, Christ derived His manhood from her, and so had an especial unity of nature with her; and this wondrous relationship between God and man, it is perhaps impossible for us to dwell much upon without some perversion of feeling. For, truly, she is raised above the condition of sinful beings, though by nature a sinner; she is brought near to God, yet is but a creature; and seems to lack her fitting place in our limited understandings, neither too high nor too low. We cannot combine in our thought of her, all we should ascribe with all we should withhold. Hence, following the example of Scripture, we had better only think of her with and for her Son, never separating her from Him, but, using her name as a memorial of His great condescension in stooping from heaven, and “not abhorring the Virgin’s womb.” And this is the rule of our own Church, which has set apart only such Festivals in honour of the Blessed Mary, as may also be Festivals in honour of our Lord; the Purification commemorating His presentation in the Temple, and the Annunciation commemorating His incarnation. And, with this caution, the thought of her may be made most profitable to our faith; for, nothing is so calculated to impress on our minds that Christ is really partaker of our nature, and in all respects man, save sin only, as to associate Him with the thought of her, by whose ministration He became our brother.

To conclude. Observe the lesson which we gain for ourselves from the history of the Blessed Virgin; that the highest graces of the soul may be matured in private, and without those fierce trials to which the many are exposed in order to their sanctification. So hard are our hearts, that affliction, pain, and anxiety are sent to humble us, and dispose us towards a true faith in the heavenly word, when preached to us. Yet, it is only our extreme obstinacy of unbelief which renders this chastisement necessary. The aids which God gives under the Gospel Covenant, have power to renew and purify our hearts, without uncommon providences to discipline us into receiving them. God gives His Holy Spirit to us silently; and the silent duties of every day, (it may be humbly hoped,) are blest to the sufficient sanctification of thousands, whom the world knows not of. The Blessed Virgin is a memorial of this; and it is consoling as well as instructive to know it. When we quench the grace of Baptism, then it is that we need severe trials to restore us. This is the case of the multitude, whose best estate is that of chastisement, repentance, supplication, and absolution, again and again. But, there are those, who go on in a calm and unswerving

course, learning day by day to love Him who has redeemed them, and overcoming the sin of their nature by His heavenly grace, as the various temptations to evil successively present themselves. And, of these undefiled followers of the Lamb, the Blessed Mary is the chief. Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, she “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;” she believed when Zacharias doubted—with a faith like Abraham’s she believed, and was blessed for her belief, and had the performance of those things which were told to her by the Lord. And when sorrow came upon her afterwards, it was but the blessed participation of her Son’s sacred sorrows, not the sorrow of those who suffer for their sins.

If we, through God’s unspeakable gift, have in any measure followed Mary’s innocence in our youth, so far let us bless Him who enabled us. But so far as we are conscious of having departed from Him, let us bewail our miserable guilt. Let us acknowledge from the heart that no punishment is too severe for us, no chastisement should be unwelcome, (though it is a sore thing to learn to welcome pain,) if it tend to burn away the corruption which has propagated itself within us. Let us count all things as gain, which God sends to cleanse away the marks of sin and shame which are upon our foreheads. The day will come at length, when our Lord and Saviour will unveil that Sacred Countenance to the whole world, which no sinner ever yet could see and live. Then will the world be forced to look upon Him, whom they pierced with their unrepented wickedness; “all faces will gather blackness.”* Then they will discern, what they do not now believe, the utter deformity of sin; while the Saints of the Lord, who seemed on earth to bear but the countenance of common men, will wake up one by one after His likeness, and be fearful to look upon. And then will be fulfilled the promise pledged to the Church on the Mount of Transfiguration. It will be “good” to be with those whose tabernacles might have been a snare to us on earth, had we been allowed to build them. We shall see our Lord, and His blessed Mother, the Apostles and Prophets, and all those righteous men whom we now read of in history, and long to know. Then we shall be taught in those Mysteries which are now above us. In the words of the Apostle, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is: and every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”†

* Joel ii. 6.

† 1 John iii. 2. 3 On the subject of this Sermon, *vide* Bishop Bull’s Sermon on Luke i. 48, 49.

SERMON XIII.

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD.

CHRIST A QUICKENING SPIRIT.

LUKE xxiv. 5, 6

Why seek ye the Living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.

SUCH is the triumphant question with which the Holy Angels put to flight the sadness of the women on the morning of Christ's resurrection. "O ye of little faith," less faith than love, more dutiful than understanding, why come ye to anoint His Body on the third day? Why seek ye the Living Saviour in the tomb? The time of sorrow is run out; victory has come, according to His word, and ye recollect it not. "He is not here, but is risen!"

These were deeds done and words spoken eighteen hundred years since; so long ago, that in the world's thought they are as though they never had been; yet they hold good to this day. Christ is to us now, just what He was in all His glorious Attributes on the morning of the Resurrection; and we are blessed in knowing it, even more than the women to whom the Angels spoke, according to His own assurance, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

On this highest of Festivals, I will attempt to set before you one out of the many comfortable subjects of reflection which it suggests.

1. First, then, observe how Christ's resurrection harmonizes with the history of His birth. David had foretold that His "soul should not be left in hell," (that is, the unseen state,) neither should "the Holy One of God see corruption." And with a reference to this prophecy, St. Peter says, that it "was not possible that He should be holden of death,"* as if there were some hidden inherent vigour in Him, which secured His Manhood from dissolution. The greatest infliction of pain and violence could only destroy its powers for a season; but nothing could make it decay. "Thou wilt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption;" so

* Ps. xvi. 10. Acts ii. 24. 27. τὸν ὅσιον.

says the Scripture, and elsewhere calls Him the *Holy* child Jesus.* These expressions carry our minds back to the Angels' announcement of His birth, in which His incorruptible and immortal nature is implied. "That *Holy* Thing" which was born of Mary, was "the Son," not of man, but "of God." Others have all been born in sin, "after Adam's own likeness, in his image,"† and, being born in sin, they are heirs to corruption. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death," and all its consequences, "by sin." Not one human being comes into existence without God's discerning evidences of sin attendant on his birth. But when the Word of Life was manifested in our flesh, the Holy Ghost displayed that creative hand, by which, in the beginning, Eve was formed: and the Holy Child, thus conceived by the Power of the Highest, was (as the history shows,) immortal even in His mortal nature, clear from all infection of the forbidden fruit, so far as to be sinless and incorruptible. Therefore, though he was liable to death, "it was impossible He should be *holden*" of it. Death might overpower, but it could not keep possession; "it had no dominion over Him."‡ He was, in the words of the text, "*the Living* among the dead."

And hence His rising from the dead may be said to have evinced His divine original. He was "*declared* to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness," that is, His essential Godhead, "by the resurrection of the dead."§ He had been condemned as a blasphemer by the Jewish Rulers, "because He made himself the Son of God;" and He was brought to the death of the Cross, not only as a punishment, but as a practical refutation of His claim. He was challenged by His enemies on this score; "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross." Thus His crucifixion was as though a trial, a new experiment on the part of Satan, who had before tempted Him, whether He was like other men, or the Son of God. Observe the event. He was obedient unto death, fulfilling the Law of that disinherited nature which He had assumed; and in order, by undergoing it, to atone for our sins. So far was permitted by God's "determinate counsel and foreknowledge;" but there the triumph of His enemies, so to account it, ended; ended, with what was necessary for our redemption. He said, "It is finished;" for His humiliation was at its lowest depth when He expired. Immediately some incipient tokens showed themselves, that the real victory was with Him; first, the earthquake and other wonders in heaven and earth. These even were enough to justify His claim in the judgment of the heathen Centurion; who said at once, "Truly this *was* the Son of God." Then followed His descent into hell, and triumph

* Acts iv. 27. τοῦ ἁγίου. † Gen. v. 3. ‡ Rom. vi. 9. § Rom. i. 4.

in the unseen world, whatever that was. Lastly, that glorious deed of Power on the third morning which we now commemorate. The dead arose. The grave could not detain Him who "had life in Himself." He rose as a man awakes in the morning, when sleep flies from him as a thing of course. Corruption had no power over that Sacred Body, the fruit of an immaculate conception. The bonds of death were broken as "green withs," witnessing by their feebleness that He was the Son of God.

Such is the connexion between Christ's birth and resurrection; and more than this might be ventured concerning His incorrupt nature, were it not better to avoid all risk of trespassing upon that reverence with which we are bound to regard it. Something might be said concerning His personal appearance, which seems to have borne the marks of one who was not tainted with birth-sin. Men could scarce keep from worshipping Him. When the Pharisees sent to seize Him, all the officers, on His merely acknowledging Himself to be Him whom they sought, fell backwards from His presence to the ground. They were scared as brutes are said to be by the voice of man. Thus, being created in God's image, He was the second Adam; and much more than Adam in His secret nature, which beamed through His tabernacle of flesh with awful purity and brightness, even in the days of His humiliation. "The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man was the Lord from Heaven."*

2. And if such was His visible Majesty, while He yet was subject to temptation, infirmity, and pain, much more abundant was the manifestation of His Godhead, when He was risen from the dead. Then the Divine Essence streamed forth (so to say) on every side, and environed His Manhood, as in a cloud of glory. So transfigured was His Sacred Body, that He, who had deigned to be born of a woman, and to hang upon the Cross, had subtle virtue in Him, like a spirit, to pass through the closed doors to His assembled followers; while, by condescending to the trial of their senses, He showed that it was no mere spirit, but He Himself, as before, with wounded hands and pierced side, who spoke to them. He manifested Himself to them, in this His exalted state, that they might be His witnesses to the people; witnesses of those separate truths which man's reason cannot combine, that He had a real human body, that it was partaker in the properties of His soul, and that it was inhabited by the Eternal Word. They handled Him,—they saw Him come and go, when the doors were shut,—they felt, what they could not see, but could witness even unto

* 1 Cor. xv. 47.

death, that He was "their Lord and their God;"—a triple evidence, first, of His Atonement, next of their own Resurrection unto glory, lastly, of His Divine Power to conduct them safely to it. Thus manifested as perfect God and perfect man, in the fulness of His sovereignty, and the immortality of His holiness, He ascended up on high to take possession of His kingdom. There He remains till the last day, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."*

3. He ascended into heaven, that He might plead our cause with the Father; as it is said, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."† Yet we must not suppose, that in leaving us He closed the gracious economy of His Incarnation, and withdrew the ministration of His incorruptible Manhood from His work of loving mercy towards us. "The Holy One of God" was ordained, not only to die for us, but also to be "the beginning" of a new "creation" unto holiness, in our sinful race; to re-fashion soul and body after His own likeness, that they might be "raised up together, and sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Blessed for ever be His Holy Name! before He went away, He remembered our necessity, and completed His work, bequeathing to us a special mode of approaching Him, Holy Mystery in which we receive, (we know not how,) the virtue of that Heavenly Body, which is the life of all that believe. This is the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which "Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us;" that we, feasting upon the Sacrifice, may be "partakers of the Divine Nature." Let us give heed lest we be in the number of those, who "discern not the Lord's Body," and the "exceeding great and precious promises," which are made to those who partake it. And since there is some danger of this, I will here make some brief remarks concerning this great gift; and pray God that our words and thoughts may accord to its unspeakable sacredness.

Christ says, "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given also to the Son to have life in Himself;" and afterwards He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also."‡ It would seem then, that as Adam is the author of death to the whole race of men, so is Christ the Origin of immortality. When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, it was as a poison spreading through his whole nature, soul and body; and thence through every one of his descendants. It was said to him, when he was placed in the garden, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" and we are told expressly, "in Adam *all* die." We all are born heirs to that infection of nature which followed upon

* Isai. ix. 6.

† Heb. vii. 25.

‡ John v. 26. xiv. 19.

His fall. But we are also told, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" and the same Law of God's Providence is maintained in both cases. Adam spreads poison; Christ diffuses life eternal. Christ communicates life to us, one by one, by means of that holy and incorrupt nature which He assumed for our redemption; how, we know not, still, though by an unseen, surely by a real communication of Himself. Therefore St. Paul says, that "the last Adam was made" not merely "a living soul," but "a *quickening*" or life-giving "Spirit," as being "the Lord from Heaven."* Again, in his own gracious words, He is "the Bread of life." "The Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world;" or, as He says more plainly, "I am the Bread which came down from Heaven;" "I am that Bread of life;" "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And again, still more clearly, "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."† Why should this communion with Him be thought incredible, mysterious and sacred as it is, when we know from the Gospels how marvellously He wrought, in the days of His humiliation, towards those who approached Him? We are told on one occasion; "The whole multitude sought to touch Him; for there went *virtue* out of Him, and healed them all." Again, when the woman, with the issue of blood, touched Him, He "immediately knew that virtue had gone out of Him."‡ Such grace was invisible, known only by the cure it effected, as in the case of the woman. Let us not doubt, though we do not sensibly approach Him, that He can still give us the virtue of His purity and incorruption, as He has promised, and in a more heavenly and spiritual manner, than "in the days of His flesh;" in a way, which does not remove the mere ailments of this temporal state, but sows the seed of eternal life in body and soul. Let us not deny Him the glory of His life-giving holiness, that diffusive grace which is the renovation of our whole race, a spirit quick and powerful and piercing, so as to leaven the whole mass of human corruption, and make it live. He is the first fruits of the Resurrection; we follow Him each in his own order, as we are hallowed by His inward presence. And in this sense among others, Christ, in the Scripture phrase, is "formed in us;" that is, the communication is made to us of His new nature, which sanctifies the soul, and makes the body immortal. In like manner we pray in the

* Gen. ii. 17. 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45, 47.

† John vi. 33—54.

‡ Luke vi. 19. Mark v. 30. Vide Knox on the Eucharist. Remains, vol. ii.

Service of the Communion, that "our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood; and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us."*

Such then is our risen Saviour in Himself and towards us:—conceived by the Holy Ghost; holy from the womb; dying, but abhorring corruption; rising again the third day by His own inherent life; exalted as the Son of God and Son of man, to raise us after Him; and filling us incomprehensibly with His immortal nature, till we become like Him, filling us with a spiritual life which may expel the poison of the tree of knowledge, and restore us to God. How wonderful a work of grace! Strange it was that Adam should be our death; but stranger still, and very gracious, that God himself should be our life, by means of that human tabernacle which He has taken on Himself.

O blessed day of the Resurrection, which of old time was called the Queen of Festivals, and raised among Christians an anxious, nay contentious diligence duly to honour it! Blessed day, once only passed in sorrow, when the Lord actually rose, and the Disciples believed not; but ever since a day of joy to the faith and love of the Church! In ancient times Christians all over the world began it with a morning salutation. Each man said to his neighbour, "Christ is risen," and his neighbour answered him; "Christ is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." Even to Simon, the coward disciple who denied Him thrice, Christ is risen; even to us, who long ago vowed to obey Him, and have yet so often denied Him before men, so often taken part with sin, and followed the world, when Christ called us another way.—"Christ is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon!" to Simon Peter, the favoured Apostle, on whom the Church is built, Christ has appeared. He has appeared to His Holy Church first of all, and in the Church He dispenses blessings, such as the world knows not of. Blessed are they if they know their blessedness, who are allowed, as we are, week after week, and Festival after Festival, to seek and find in that Holy Church the Saviour of their souls! Blessed are they beyond language or thought, to whom it is vouchsafed to receive those tokens of His love, which cannot otherwise be gained by man, the pledges and means of His special presence, in the Sacrament of His Supper; who are allowed to eat and drink the food of immortality, and receive life from the bleeding side of the Son of God! Alas! by what strange coldness of heart, or perverse superstition is it, that any one called Christian, keeps away from that heavenly ordinance? Is it not very grievous that there should be any one who fears to share in the greatest conceivable

* Vide note at the end of this [second Vol. Eng. Ed.] volume.

blessing which could come upon sinful men? What in truth is that fear, but unbelief, a slavish, sin-loving obstinacy, if it leads a man to go year after year without the spiritual sustenance which God has provided for him? Is it wonderful that, as time goes on, he should learn deliberately to doubt of the grace therein given? that he should no longer look upon the Lord's Supper as a heavenly feast, or the Lord's Minister who consecrates it, as a chosen vessel, or that Holy Church in which he ministers as a Divine Ordinance, to be cherished as the parting legacy of Christ to a sinful world? Is it wonderful that seeing he sees not, and hearing he hears not; and that, lightly regarding all the gifts of Christ, he feels no reverence for the treasure-house wherein they are stored?

But we, who trust that so far we are doing God's will inasmuch as we are keeping to those ordinances and rules, which His Son has left us, we may humbly rejoice in this day, with a joy the world cannot take away, any more than it can understand. Truly, in this time of rebuke and blasphemy, we cannot but be sober and subdued in our rejoicing; yet our peace and joy may be deeper and fuller even for that very seriousness. For nothing can harm those who bear Christ within them. Trial or temptation, time of tribulation, time of wealth, pain, bereavement, anxiety, sorrow, the insults of the enemy, the loss of worldly goods, nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* This the Apostle told us long since; but we, in this age of the world, over and above his word have the experience of many centuries for our comfort. We have his own history to show us how Christ within us is stronger than the world around us, and will prevail. We have the history of all his fellow-sufferers, of all the Confessors and Martyrs of early times, and since, to show us that Christ's arm "is not shortened, that it cannot save;" that faith and love have a real abiding place on earth; that, come what will, His grace is sufficient for His Church, and His strength made perfect in weakness: that, "even to old age, and to hoar hairs, He will carry and deliver" her: that, in whatever time the powers of evil give challenge, Martyrs and Saints will start forth again, and rise from the dead, as plentiful as though they had never been before, even "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands."†

Meantime, while Satan only threatens, let us possess our hearts in patience; try to keep quiet: aim at obeying God, in all things, little

* Rom. viii. 39.

† Rev. xx. 4.

as well as great ; do the duties of our calling which lie before us, day by day ; and “ take no thought for the morrow, for sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

SERMON XIV.

MONDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

SAVING KNOWLEDGE.

1 JOHN ii. 3.

Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

To know God and Christ, in Scripture language, seems to mean, to live under the conviction of His presence, who is to our bodily eyes unseen. It is, in fact, to have faith, according to St. Paul's account of faith, as the substance and evidence of what is invisible. It is faith, but not faith such as a Heathen might have, but Gospel faith ; for only in the Gospel has God so revealed Himself, as to allow of that kind of faith which may be called, in a special manner, knowledge. The faith of Heathens was *blind* ; it was more or less a moving forward in the darkness with hand and foot ;—therefore the Apostle says, “ if haply they might *feel* after Him.”† But the Gospel is a *manifestation*, and therefore addressed to the eyes of our mind. Faith is the same principle as before, but with the opportunity of acting through a more certain and satisfactory sense. We recognize objects by the eye at once ; but not by the touch. We know them when we see them, but scarcely till then. Hence it is, that the New Testament says so much on the subject of spiritual knowledge. For instance, St. Paul prays that the Ephesians may receive “ the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened ;” and he says, that the Colossians had “ put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him.” St. Peter, in like manner, addresses his brethren with the salutation of

* Matt. vi. 34.

† Acts xvii. 27.

"Grace and peace, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord;" according to the declaration of our Lord Himself, "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."* Not of course as if Christian faith had not still abundant exercise for the other senses (so to call them) of the soul; but that the eye is its peculiar sense, by which it is distinguished from the faith of Heathens, nay, I may add, of Jews.

It is plain what is the Object of spiritual sight which is vouchsafed us in the Gospel,—“God manifest in the Flesh.” He who was before unseen has shown himself in Christ; not merely displayed His glory, as (for instance) in what is called a providence, or visitation, or in miracles, or in the actions and character of inspired men, but really He Himself has come upon earth, and has been seen of men in human form. In the same kind of sense, in which we should say we saw a servant of His, Apostle or prophet, though we could not see his soul, so man has seen the Invisible God; and we have the history of His sojourn among His creatures in the Gospels.

To know God is life eternal, and to believe in the Gospel manifestation of Him is to know Him; but how are we to “know that we know Him? How are we to be sure that we are not mistaking some dream of our own for the true and clear Vision? How can we tell we are not like gazers upon a distant prospect through a misty atmosphere, who mistake one object for another? The text answers us clearly and intelligibly; though some Christians have recourse to other proofs of it, or will not have patience to ask themselves the question. They say they are quite certain that they have true faith; for faith carries with it its own evidence, and admits of no mistaking, the true spiritual conviction being unlike all others. On the other hand, St. John says, “Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” Obedience is the test of Faith.

Thus the whole duty and work of a Christian is made up of these two parts, Faith and Obedience; “looking unto Jesus,” the Divine Object as well as Author of our faith, and acting according to His will. Not as if a certain frame of mind, certain notions, affections, feelings, and states, were not a necessary condition of a saving state; but so it is, the Apostle does not insist upon it, as if it were sure to follow, if our hearts do but grow into these two chief contemplations, the view of God in Christ, and the diligent aim to obey Him in our conduct.

I conceive that we are in danger, in this day, of insisting on neither

* Eph. i. 17, 18. Col. iii. 10. 2 Pet. i. 2. John xvii. 3.

of these as we ought ; regarding all true and careful consideration of the Object as of faith, as barren orthodoxy, technical subtlety, and the like, and all due earnestness about good works as a mere cold and formal morality ; and, instead, making religion, or rather (for this is the point) making the test of our being religious, to consist in our having what is called a spiritual state of heart, to the comparative neglect of the Object from which it must arise, and the works in which it should issue. At this season, when we are especially engaged in considering the full triumph and manifestation of our Lord and Saviour, when He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," it may be appropriate to make some remarks on an error, which goes far to deprive us of the benefit of His condescension.

St. John speaks of knowing Christ and of keeping His commandments, as the two great departments of religious duty and blessedness. To know Christ is, (as I have said,) to discern the Father of all, as manifested through His Only-begotten Son Incarnate. In the natural world we have glimpses, frequent and startling, of His glorious Attributes ; of His power, wisdom, and goodness, of His holiness, His fearful judgments, His long remembrance of evil, His long-suffering towards sinners, and His strange encompassing mercy, when we least looked for it. But to us mortals, who live for a day, and see but an arm's length, such disclosures are like reflections of a prospect in a broken mirror ; they do not enable us in any comfortable sense to know God. They are such as faith may use indeed, but hardly enjoy. This then was one among the benefits of Christ's coming, that the Invisible God was then revealed in the form and history of man, revealed in those respects in which sinners most required to know Him, and nature spoke least distinctly, as a Holy, yet Merciful Governor of His creatures. And thus the Gospels, which contain the memorials of this wonderful grace, are our principal treasures. They may be called the text of the Revelation ; and the Epistles, especially St. Paul's, are as comments upon it, unfolding and illustrating it in its various parts, raising history into doctrine, ordinances into sacraments, detached words or actions into principles, and thus every where dutifully preaching His Person, work, and will. St. John is both Prophet and Evangelist, recording and commenting on the Ministry of his Lord. Still, in every case, He is the chief Prophet of the Church, and His Apostles do but explain His words and actions ; according to His own account of the guidance promised to them, that it should "glorify" Him. The like service is ministered to Him by the Creeds and doctrinal expositions of the early Church, which we retain in our Services. They speak of no

ideal being, such as the imagination alone contemplates, but of the very Son of God, whose life is recorded in the Gospels. Thus every part of the Dispensation tends to the manifestation of Him who is its centre.

Turning from Him to ourselves, we find a short rule given us, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."* This is all that is put upon us, difficult indeed to perform, but easy to understand; all that is put upon us,—and for this plain reason, because Christ has done every thing else. He has freely chosen us, died for us, regenerated us, and now ever liveth for us; what remains? Simply that we should do as he has done to us, showing forth His glory by good works. Thus a correct, or (as we commonly call it,) an orthodox faith and an obedient life, is the whole duty of man. And so most surely, it has ever been accounted. Look into the records of the early Church, or into the writings of our own revered Bishops and Teachers, and see whether this is not the sum total of religion, according to the symbols of it in which children are catechized, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.

However, it is objected that such a view of religious duty encourages self-deception; that a man who does no more than believe aright, and keep God's commandments, is what is called a formalist; that his heart is not interested in the matter, his affections remain unrenewed; and that till a change takes place there, all the faith and all the obedience which mind can conceive, are but external, and avail nothing; that to his heart therefore we must make our appeal, that we must bid him search himself, examine his motives, look narrowly lest he rest upon himself, and be sure that his feelings and thoughts are spiritual before he takes to himself any comfort. The merits of this view of religion shall be considered hereafter: at present, let us take it merely in the light of an objection to what has been already stated. I ask then in reply, how is a man to know that his motives and affections are right except by their fruits? Can they possibly be their own evidence? Are they like colours, which a man knows at once without test or calculation? Is not every feeling and opinion, of one colour or another, fair or unpleasant, in each man's own judgment, according to the centre light which is set up in his soul? Is not the light that is in a man sometimes even darkness, sometimes twilight, and sometimes of this

* John xiv. 15. 1 John ii. 6. Col. iii. 1.

hue or that, tinging every part of himself with its own peculiarity? How then is it possible that a man can duly examine his feelings and affections by the light within him? how can he accurately decide upon their character whether, Christian or not? It is necessary then that he go out of himself in order to assay and ascertain the nature of the principles which govern him; that is, he must have recourse to his works, and compare them with Scripture, as the only evidence to himself, whether or not his heart is perfect with God. It seems therefore, that the proposed inquiry into the workings of a man's mind means nothing at all, comes to no issue, leaves us where it found us; unless we adopt the notion, (which is seldom however openly maintained,) that religious faith is its own evidence.

On the other hand, deeds of obedience are an intelligible evidence, nay, the sole evidence possible, and, on the whole, a satisfactory evidence of the reality of our faith. I do not say, that this or that good work tells any thing; but a course of obedience says much. Various deeds done in different departments of duty, support and attest each other. Did a man act merely a bold and firm part, he would have cause to say to himself, "perhaps all this is mere pride and obstinacy." Were he merely yielding and forgiving,—he might be indulging a natural indolence of mind. Were he merely industrious,—this might consist with ill-temper, or selfishness. Did he merely fulfil the duties of his temporal calling,—he would have no proof that he had given his heart to God at all. Were he merely regular at Church and Holy Communion,—many a man is such who has a lax conscience, who is not scrupulously fair-dealing, or is censorious, or niggardly. Is he what is called a domestic character, amiable, affectionate, fond of his family? let him beware lest he put wife and children in the place of God who gave them. Is he only temperate, sober, chaste, correct in his language? it may arise from mere dullness and insensibility, or may consist with spiritual pride. Is he cheerful and obliging? it may arise from youthful spirits and ignorance of the world. Does he choose his friends by a strictly orthodox rule? he may be harsh and uncharitable; or, is he zealous and serviceable in defending the Truth? still he may be unable to condescend to men of low estate, to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep. No one is without some good quality or other; Balaam had a scruple about misrepresenting God's message, Saul was brave, Joab was loyal, the Bethel Prophet revered God's servants, the witch of Endor was hospitable; and therefore, of course, no one good deed or disposition is the criterion of a spiritual mind. Still, on the other hand, there is no one of its characteristics which has not its appropriate outward evidence; and, in pro-

proportion as these external acts are multiplied and varied, so does the evidence of it become stronger and more consoling. General conscientiousness is the only assurance we can have of possessing it ; and at this we must aim, determining to obey God consistently, with a jealous carefulness about all things, little and great. This is, in Scripture language, to “serve God with a perfect heart ;” as you will see at once, if you compare the respective reformation of Jehu and Josiah. As far then as a man has reason to hope that he is *consistent*, so far may he humbly trust that he has true faith. To be consistent, to “walk in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless,” is his one business ; still, all along looking reverently towards the Great Objects of faith, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, One God, and the Son incarnate, for our salvation. Certainly he will have enough to direct his course by, with God in his eye, and his work in his hand, though he forbear curious experiments about his sensations and emotions ; and, if it be objected that an evidence from works is but a cold comfort, as being at best but faint and partial, I reply, that after all, it is more than sinners have a right to ask,—that if it be little at first, it grows with our growth in grace,—and, moreover, that such an evidence, more than any other, throws us in faith upon the loving-kindness and meritorious sufferings of our Saviour. Surely, even our best doings have that taint of sinfulness pervading them, which will remind us ever, while we regard them, where our True Hope is lodged. Men are satisfied with themselves, not when they attempt, but when they neglect the details of duty. Disobedience blinds the conscience ; obedience makes it keensighted and sensitive. The more we *do*, the more we shall trust in Christ ; and, that surely is no morose doctrine, which, after giving us whatever evidence of our safety can be given, leads us to soothe our selfish restlessness, and forget our fears in the vision of the Incarnate Son of God.

Lastly, it may be objected, that, since many deeds of obedience are themselves acts of the mind, to do them well we must necessarily examine our feelings ; that we cannot pray, for instance, without reflecting on ourselves as we use the words of prayer, and keeping our thoughts upon God ; that we cannot repress anger or impatience, or cherish loving and forgiving thoughts, without searching and watching ourselves. But such an argument rests on a misconception of what I have been saying. All I would maintain is, that our duty lies in acts,—acts of course of every kind, acts of the mind, as well as of the tongue, or of the hand ; but any how it lies mainly in acts ; it does not directly lie in moods or feelings. He who aims at praying well, loving sincerely, disputing meekly, as the respective duties occur, is wise and

religious ; but he who aims vaguely and generally at being in a spiritual frame of mind, is entangled in a deceit of words which gain a meaning only by being made mischievous. Let us do our duty as it presents itself ; this is the secret of true faith and peace. We have power over our deeds, under God's grace ; we have no direct power over our habits. Let us but secure our actions, as God would have them, and our habits will follow. Suppose a religious man, for instance, in the society of strangers ; he takes things as they come, discourses naturally, gives his opinion soberly, and does good according to each opportunity of good. His heart is in his work, and his thoughts rest without effort on his God and Saviour. This is the way of a Christian ; he leaves it to the ill-instructed to endeavour after a (so called) spiritual frame of mind amid the bustle of life, which has no existence except in attempt and profession. True spiritual-mindedness is unseen by man, like the soul itself, of which it is a quality ; and as the soul is known by its operations, so it is known by its fruits.

I will add too that the office of self-examination lies rather in detecting what is bad in us than in ascertaining what is good. No harm can follow from contemplating our sins, so that we keep Christ before us, and attempt to overcome them ; such a review of self, will but lead to repentance and faith. And while it does this, it will undoubtedly be moulding our hearts into a higher and more heavenly state ; but still indirectly,—just as the mean is attained in action or art, not by directly contemplating and aiming at it, but negatively, by avoiding extremes.

To conclude, the essence of Faith is to look out of ourselves ; now, consider what manner of a believer he is, who imprisons himself in his own thoughts, and rests on the workings of his own mind, and thinks of his Saviour as an idea of his imagination, instead of putting self aside, and living upon Him who speaks in the Gospels.

So much then, by way of suggestion, upon the view of Religious Faith, which has ever been received in the Church Catholic, and which, doubtless, is saving. To-morrow, I propose to speak more particularly of that other system, to which these latter times have given birth.

S E R M O N X V .

TUESDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

SELF-CONTEMPLATION.

HEBREWS xii. 2.

Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

SURELY it is our duty ever to look off ourselves, and to look unto Jesus ; that is, to shun the contemplation of our own feelings, emotions, frame, and state of mind, as if it were the main business of religion, and to leave these mainly to be secured in their fruits. Some remarks were made yesterday upon this “ more excellent ” and Scriptural way of conducting ourselves, as it has ever been received in the Church ; now let us consider the merits of the rule for holy living, which the fashion of this day would substitute for it.

Instead of looking off to Jesus, and thinking little of ourselves, it is at present thought necessary among the mixed multitude of religionists, to examine the heart, with a view of ascertaining whether it is in a spiritual state or no. A spiritual frame of mind is considered to be one in which the heinousness of sin is perceived, our utter worthlessness, the impossibility of our saving ourselves, the necessity of some Saviour, the sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ to be that Saviour, the unbounded riches of His love, the excellence and glory of His work of Atonement, the freeness and fulness of His grace, the high privilege of communion with Him in prayer, and the desirableness of walking with Him in all holy and loving obedience ; all of them solemn truths, too solemn to be lightly mentioned, but our hearty reception of which is scarcely ascertainable by a direct inspection of our feelings. Moreover, if one doctrine must be selected above the rest as containing the essence of the truths, which (according to this system,) are thus vividly understood by the spiritual Christian, it is that of the necessity of renouncing our own righteousness for the righteousness provided by our Lord and Saviour ; which is considered, not as an elementary and simple principle, (as it really is,) but as rarely and hardly acknowledged by

any man, especially repugnant to a certain (so-called) pride of heart, which is supposed to run through the whole race of Adam, and to lead every man instinctively to insist even before God on the proper merits of his good deeds ; so that, to trust in Christ, is not merely the work of the Holy Spirit, (as all good in our souls is,) but, is the especial and critical event which marks a man, as issuing from darkness, and sealed unto the privileges and inheritance of the sons of God. In other words, the doctrine of Justification by Faith, is accounted to be the one cardinal point of the Gospel ; and it is in vain to admit it readily as a clear Scripture truth (which it is,) and to attempt to go on unto perfection : the very wish to pass forward is interpreted into a wish to pass over it, and the test of believing it at all, is in fact to insist upon no doctrine but it. And this peculiar mode of inculcating that great doctrine of the Gospel, is a proof, (if that were wanting,) that the persons who adopt it are not solicitous even about it on its own score merely, considered as (what is called) a dogma, but as ascertaining and securing (as they hope) a certain state of heart. For, not content with the simple admission of it on the part of another, they proceed to divide faith into its kinds, living and dead, and to urge against him, that the Truth may be held in a carnal and unrenewed mind, and that men may speak without real feelings and convictions. Thus it is clear they do not contend for the doctrine of Justification as a truth external to the mind, or article of faith, any more than for the doctrine of the Trinity. On the other hand, since they use this same language about dead and living faith, however exemplary the life and conduct be of the individual under their review, they as plainly show that neither are the fruits of righteousness in their system an evidence of spiritual-mindedness, but that a something is to be sought for in the frame of mind itself. All this is not stated at present by way of objection, but in order to settle accurately what they mean to maintain. So now we have the two views of doctrine clearly before us :—the ancient and universal teaching of the Church, insisting on the Objects and fruits of faith, and considering the spiritual character of that faith itself sufficiently secured, if these are as they should be ; and the method, now in esteem, attempting instead to secure directly and primarily that “mind of the Spirit,” which may savingly receive the truths, and fulfil the obedience of the Gospel. That such a spiritual temper is indispensable, is agreed on all hands. The simple question is, whether it is formed by the Holy Spirit immediately acting upon our minds, or, on the other hand, by our own particular acts, (whether of faith or obedience,) prompted, guided, and prospered by Him ; whether it is ascertainable otherwise than by its fruits ; whether such frames of mind as *are* directly ascertainable and profess to be

spiritual, are not rather a delusion, a mere excitement, capricious feeling, fanatic fancy, and the like.—So much then by way of explanation.

1. Now, in the first place, this modern system certainly does disparage the revealed doctrines of the Gospel, however its more moderate advocates may shrink from admitting it. Considering a certain state of heart to be the main thing to be aimed at, they avowedly make the Truth as it is in Jesus, the definite Creed of the Church, second in their teaching and profession. They will defend themselves indeed from the appearance of undervaluing it, by maintaining, that the existence of right religious affections is a security for sound views of doctrine. And this is abstractedly true ;—but not true in the use they make of it : for they unhappily conceive that they can ascertain in each other the presence of these affections, and when they find men possessed of them, (as they conceive,) yet not altogether orthodox in their belief, then they relax a little, and argue that an admission of (what they call) the strict and technical niceties of doctrine, whether about the Consubstantiality of the Son or the Hypostatic Union, is scarcely part of the definition of a spiritual believer. In order to support this position, they lay it down as self-evident, that the main purpose of revealed doctrine is to affect the heart,—that that which does not seem to affect it, does not affect it,—that what does not affect it is unnecessary,—and that the circumstance that this or that person's heart seems rightly affected, is a sufficient warrant that such Articles as he may happen to reject, may be universally rejected, or at least are only accidentally important. Such principles, when once become familiar to the mind, induce a certain disproportionate attention to the doctrines connected with the work of Christ, in comparison of those which relate to His Person, from their more immediately interesting and exciting character ; and carry on the more speculative and philosophical class to view the doctrines of Atonement and Sanctification as the essence of the Gospel, and to advocate them in the place of those “ Heavenly Things ” altogether, which, as theologically expressed, they have already assailed ; and of which they now openly complain as mysteries for bondsmen, not Gospel consolations. The last and most miserable stage of this false wisdom, is to deny that in matters of doctrine there is any one sense of Scripture such, that it is true and all others false ; to make the Gospel of Truth (so far) a revelation of words and a dead letter ; to consider that inspiration speaks merely of divine operations, not of Persons ; and that that is truth to each, which each man thinks to be true, so that one man may say that Christ is God, another deny His pre-existence, yet each have received the Truth according to the peculiar constitution of his own mind, the Scripture doctrine having no real independent substantive meaning.

Thus the system under consideration tends legitimately to obliterate the great Objects brought to light in the Gospel, and to darken what I called yesterday the eye of faith ; to throw us back into the vagueness of Heathenism, when men only felt after the Divine Presence ; and thus to frustrate the design of Christ's incarnation so far as it is a manifestation of the Unseen Creator.

2. On the other hand, the necessity of obedience in order to salvation does not suffer less from the upholders of this modern system than the articles of the Creed. They argue, and truly, that if faith is living, works must follow ; but mistaking a following *in order of conception* for a following *in order of time*, they conclude that faith ever comes first, and works afterwards ; and therefore, that faith must first be secured, and that by some means in which works have no share. Thus, instead of viewing works as the concomitant development and evidence, and instrumental cause, as well as the subsequent result of faith, they lay all the stress upon the direct creation, in their minds, of faith and spiritual-mindedness, which they consider to consist in certain emotions and desires, because they can form abstractedly no better or truer notion of those qualities. Then, instead of being " careful to maintain good works," they proceed to take it for granted, that since they have attained faith, (as they consider,) works will follow without their trouble as a matter of course. Thus the wise are taken in their own craftiness ; they attempt to reason, and are overcome by sophisms. Had they kept to the Inspired Record, instead of reasoning, their way would have been clear ; and, considering the serious exhortations to keeping God's commandments, with which all Scripture abounds, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, is it not a very grave question, which the most charitable among Churchmen must put to himself, whether these random expounders of the Blessed Gospel are not risking a participation in the wo denounced against those who preach any other doctrine besides that delivered unto us, or who " take away from the words of the Book" of revealed Truth ?

3. But still more evidently do they fall into this last imputation, when we consider how they are obliged to treat the Sacred Volume altogether, in order to support the system they have adopted. Is it too much to say that, instead of attempting to harmonize Scripture with Scripture, much less referring to Antiquity to enable them to do so, they either drop altogether, or explain away, whole portions of the Bible, and those most sacred ones ? How does the authority of the Psalms stand with their opinions, except at best by a forced figurative interpretation ? And our Lord's discourses in the Gospels, especially the Sermon on the Mount, are they not virtually considered as chiefly important to the per-

sons immediately addressed, and of inferior instructiveness to us now that the Spirit (as it is profanely said) is come? In short, is not the rich and varied Revelation of our merciful Lord practically reduced to a few chapters of St. Paul's Epistles, whether rightly (as they maintain) or (as we would say) perversely understood? If then the Romanists have added to the word of God, is it not undeniable that there is a school of religionists among us who have taken from it?

4. I would remark, that the immediate tendency of these opinions is to undervalue ordinances as well as doctrines. The same argument evidently applies; for, if the renewed state of heart is (as it is supposed) attained, what matter whether Sacraments have or have not been administered? The notion of invisible grace and invisible privileges is, on this supposition, altogether superseded; that of communion with Christ is limited to the mere exercise of the affections in prayer and meditation, to sensible effects; and he who considers he has already gained this one essential gift of grace (as he calls it,) may plausibly inquire, after the fashion of the day, why he need wait upon ordinances which he has anticipated in his religious attainments,—which are means to an end, which *he* has not to seek, even if they be not outward forms altogether,—and whether Christ will not accept at the last day all who believe, without inquiring if they were members of the Church, or were confirmed, or were baptized, or received the blessing of mere men who are “earthen vessels.”

5. The foregoing remarks go to show the utterly unevangelical character of the system in question; unevangelic in the full sense of the word, whether by the Gospel be meant the inspired document of it, or the doctrines brought to light through it, or the Sacramental Institutions which are the gift of it, or the theology which interprets it, or the Covenant which is the basis of it. A few words shall now be added, to show the inherent mischief of the system as such; which I conceive to lie in its necessarily involving a continual self-contemplation and reference to self in all departments of conduct. He who aims at attaining sound doctrine or right practice, more or less looks out of himself; whereas, in labouring after a certain frame of mind, there is an habitual reflex action of the mind upon itself. That this is really involved in the modern system, is evident from the very doctrine principally insisted on by it; for, as if it were not enough for a man to look up simply to Christ for salvation, it is declared to be necessary that he should be able to recognize this in himself, that he should define his own state of mind, confess he is justified by faith alone, and explain what is meant by that confession. Now, the truest obedience is indisputably that which is done from love of God, without narrowly measuring the

magnitude or nature of the sacrifice involved in it. He who has learned to give names to his thoughts and deeds, to appraise them as if for the market, to attach to each its due measure of commendation or usefulness, will soon involuntarily corrupt his motives by pride or selfishness. A sort of self-approbation will insinuate itself into his mind ; so subtle as not at once to be recognised by himself,—an habitual quiet self-esteem, leading him to prefer his own views to those of others, and a secret, if not avowed persuasion, that he is in a different state from the generality of those around him. This is an incidental, though of course not a necessary evil of religious journals ; nay, of such compositions as Ministerial duties involve. They lead those who write them, in some respect or other, to a contemplation of self. Moreover, as to religious journals useful as they often are, at the same time, I believe persons find great difficulty, while recording their feelings, in banishing the thought that one day these good feelings will be known to the world, and are thus insensibly led to modify and prepare their language as if for a representation. Seldom indeed is any one in the *practice* of contemplating his better thoughts or doings, without proceeding to display them to others ; and hence it is, that it is so easy to discover a conceited man. When this is encouraged in the sacred province of religion, it produces a certain unnatural solemnity of manner, arising from a wish to be, nay, to appear spiritual ; which is at once very painful to beholders, and surely quite at variance with our Saviour's rule of anointing our head and washing our face, even when we are most self-abased in heart. Another mischief arising from this self-contemplation is the peculiar kind of selfishness (if I may use so harsh a term) which it will be found to foster. They who make self instead of their Maker the great object of their contemplation, will naturally exalt themselves. Without denying that the glory of God is the great end to which all things are to be referred, they will be led to connect indissolubly His glory with their own certainty of salvation ; and this partly accounts for its being so common to find rigid predestinarian views and the *exclusive* maintenance of justification by Faith in the same persons. And for the same reason, the Scripture doctrines relative to the Church and its offices will be unpalatable to such religionists ; no one thing being so irreconcilable with another, as the system which makes a man's thoughts centre in himself, with that which directs them to a fountain of grace and truth, on which God has made him dependent.

And as self-confidence and spiritual pride are the legitimate results of these opinions in one set of persons, so in another they lead to a feverish anxiety about their religious state and prospects, and fears lest they are under the reprobation of their All-merciful Saviour. It need

scarcely be said that a contemplation of self is a frequent attendant, and a frequent precursor of a deranged state of the mental powers.

To conclude.—It must not be supposed from the foregoing remarks, that I am imputing all the consequences enumerated to every one who holds the main doctrine from which they legitimately follow. Many men zealously maintain principles which they never follow out in their own minds, or after a time silently discard, except as far as words go; but which are sure to receive a full development in the history of any school or party of men which adopts them. Considered thus, as the characteristics of a school, the principles in question are doubtless anti-christian; for they destroy all positive doctrine, all ordinances, all good works, they foster pride, invite hypocrisy, discourage the weak, and deceive most fatally, while they profess to be the especial antidotes to self-deception. We have seen these effects of them two centuries since in the history of the English Branch of the Church; for what we know, a more fearful triumph is still in store for them. But, however that may be, let not the watchmen of Jerusalem fail to give timely warning of the approaching enemy, or to acquit themselves of all cowardice or compliance as regards it. Let them prefer the Old Commandment, as it has been from the beginning, to any novelties of man; recollecting Christ's words, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."*

* Rev. xvi. 15.

SERMON XVI.

THE FEAST OF ST. MARK, THE EVANGELIST RELIGIOUS COWARDICE.

HEBREWS xii. 12.

Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

THE chief points of St. Mark's history are these :—first, that he was sister's-son to Barnabas, and taken with him and St. Paul on their first apostolical journey ; next, that after a short time he deserted them, and returned to Jerusalem ; next, that after an interval, he was St. Peter's assistant at Rome, and composed his Gospel there principally from the accounts which he received from that Apostle ; lastly, that he was sent by him to Alexandria, in Egypt, where he founded one of the strictest and most powerful churches of the primitive times.

The points of *contrast* in his history are as follows :—that first he abandoned the cause of the Gospel as soon as danger appeared ; afterwards, he proved himself, not merely an ordinary Christian, but a most resolute and exact servant of God, founding, and ruling that strictest Church of Alexandria.

And the *means* of this change were, as it appears, the influence of St. Peter, a fit restorer of a timid and backsliding disciple.

The *encouragement* which we derive from these circumstances in St. Mark's history, is, that the feeblest among us may through God's grace become strong. And the *warning* to be drawn from it is, to distrust ourselves ; and again, not to despise weak brethren, or to despair of them, but to bear their burdens and help them forward, if so be we may restore them. Now, let us attentively consider the subject thus brought before us.

Some men are naturally impetuous and active : others love quiet and readily yield. The over-earnest must be sobered, and the indolent must be roused. The history of Moses supplies us with an instance of a proud and rash spirit, tamed down to an extreme gentleness of deportment. In the greatness of the change wrought in him, when from a fierce, though honest, avenger of his brethren, he became the meek-

est of men on the earth, he evidences the power of faith, the influence of the Spirit on the heart. St. Mark's history affords a specimen of the other, and still rarer change, from timidity to boldness. Difficult, as it is, to subdue the more violent passions, yet I believe it to be still more difficult to overcome a tendency to sloth, cowardice, and despondency. These evil dispositions cling about a man, and weigh him down. They are minute chains, binding him on every side to the earth, so that he cannot even turn himself or make an effort to rise. It would seem as if right principles had yet to be planted in the indolent mind; whereas violent and obstinate tempers had already something of the nature of firmness and zeal in them, or rather what will become so with care, exercise, and God's blessing. Besides, the events of life have a powerful influence in sobering the ardent or self-confident temper. Disappointments, pain, anxiety, advancing years, bring with them some natural wisdom as a matter of course; and, though such tardy improvement bespeaks but a weak faith, yet we may believe that the Holy Ghost often blesses these means, however slowly and imperceptibly. On the other hand, these same circumstances do but increase the defects of the timid and irresolute; who are made more indolent, selfish, and faint-hearted by advancing years, and find a sort of sanction of their unworthy caution in their experience of the vicissitudes of life.

St. Mark's change, therefore, may be considered even more astonishing in its nature than that of the Jewish Lawgiver. "By faith," he was "out of weakness made strong;" and becomes a memorial of the more glorious and marvellous gifts of the last and spiritual Dispensation.

Observe in what St. Mark's weakness lay. There is a sudden defection, which arises from self-confidence. Such was St. Peter's. He had trusted too much to his mere good feelings; he was honest and sincere, and he thought that he could do what he wished to do. How far apart from each other are to wish and to do! yet we are apt to confuse them. Sometimes indeed earnest desire of an object will by a sudden impulse surmount difficulties, and succeed without previous practice. Enthusiasm certainly does wonders in this way; just as men of weakly frames will sometimes from extreme excitement inflict blows of incredible power. And sometimes eagerness sets us on beginning to exert ourselves; and, the first obstacles being thus removed, we go on as a matter of course with comparatively small labour. All this, being from time to time witnessed, impresses us with a conviction, unknown to ourselves, that a sanguine temper is the main condition of success in any work. And when, in our lonely imaginings, we fancy

ourselves taking a strenuous part in some great undertaking, or when we really see others playing the man, so very easy does heroism seem to be, that we cannot admit the possibility of our failing, should circumstances call us to any difficult duty. St. Peter thought that he could preserve his integrity, because he wished to do so; and he fell from ignorance of the difficulty of doing what he wished.

In St. Mark's history, however, we have no evidence of self-confidence; rather, we may discern in it the state of multitudes at the present day, who proceed through life with a certain sense of religion on their minds, who have been brought up well and know the Truth, who acquit themselves respectably while danger is at a distance, but disgrace their profession, when brought into any unexpected trial. His mother was a woman of influence among the Christians at Jerusalem; his mother's brother, Barnabas, was an eminent Apostle. Doubtless he had received a religious education; and, as being the friend of Apostles and in the bosom of the pure Church of Christ, he had the best models of sanctity before his eyes, the clearest teaching, the fullest influence of grace. He was shielded from temptation. The time came when his real proficiency in faith and obedience was to be tried. Paul and Barnabas were sent forth to preach to the heathen; and they took Mark with them as an attendant. First they sailed to Cyprus, the native place of Barnabas: they travelled about it, and then crossed over to the main land. This seems to have been their first entrance upon an unknown country. Mark was discouraged at the prospect of danger, and returned to Jerusalem.

Now, who does not see that such a character as this, such a trial, and such a fall, belong to other days, besides those of the Apostles? Or rather, to put the question to us more closely, who will deny that there are multitudes in the Church at present, who have no evidence to themselves of more than that passive faith and virtue, which in Mark's case proved so unequal even to a slight trial? Who has not some misgivings of heart, lest, in times such as these, when Christian firmness is so little tried, his own loyalty to his Saviour's cause be perchance no truer or firmer than that of the sister's-son of a great Apostle? When the Church is at peace, as it has long been in this country, when public order is preserved in the community, and the rights of person and property secured, there is extreme danger lest we judge ourselves by what is without us, not by what is within. We take for granted we are Christians, because we have been taught aright, and are regular in our attendance upon the Christian ordinances. But, great privilege and duty as it is to use the means of grace, reading and prayer are not enough; nor by themselves, will they ever make us real Christians,

They will give us right knowledge and good feelings, but not firm faith and resolute obedience. Christians, such as Mark, will abound in a prosperous Church; and should trouble come, they will be unprepared for it. They have so long been accustomed to external peace, that they do not like to be persuaded, that danger is at hand. They settle it in their imagination that they are to live and die undisturbed. They look at the world's events, as they express it, *cheerfully*; and argue themselves into self-deception. Next, they make concessions, to fulfil their own predictions and wishes; and surrender the Christian cause, that unbelievers may not commit themselves to an open attack upon it. Some of them are men of cultivated and refined taste; and these shrink from the rough life of pilgrims, to which they are called, as something strange and extravagant. They consider those, who take a simpler view of the duties and prospects of the Church, to be enthusiastic, rash, and intemperate, or perverse-minded. To speak plainly, a state of persecution is not, (what is familiarly called,) their *element*; they cannot breathe in it. Alas! how different from the Apostle, who had learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content, and who was all things to all men. If then there be times when we have grown thus torpid from long security, and are tempted to prefer the treasures of Egypt to the reproach of Christ, what can we do, what ought we to do, but to pray God in some way or other to try the very heart of the Church, and to afflict us here rather than hereafter? Dreadful as is the prospect of Satan's temporary triumph, fierce as are the horsehoofs of his riders, and detestible as is the cause for which they battle, yet better such anguish should come upon us than that the recesses of our heritage should be the hiding-places of a self-indulgent spirit, and the schools of lukewarmness. May God arise, and shake terribly the earth, (though it be an awful prayer,) *rather* than the double-minded should lie hid among us, and souls be lost by present ease! Let Him arise, if there be no alternative, and chasten us with his sweet discipline, as our hearts may best bear it; bringing our sins out in this world, that we be not condemned in the day of the Lord, shaming us here, reproofing us by the mouth of His servants, then restoring us, and leading us on by a better way to a truer and holier hope! Let Him winnow us, till the chaff is clean removed! though, in thus invoking Him, we know not what we ask, and feeling the end itself to be good, yet cannot worthily estimate the fearfulness of that chastisement which we so freely speak about. Doubtless we do not, cannot measure the terrors of the Lord's judgments; we use words cheaply. Still, it cannot be wrong to use them, seeing they are the best offering we can make to God: and, so that we beg Him the while to lead us on, and give us strength to bear

the trial according as it opens upon us. So may we issue Evangelists for timid deserters of the cause of truth; speaking the words of Christ, and showing forth His life and death; rising strong from our sufferings, and building up the Church in the strictness and zeal of those who despise this life except as it leads to another.

Lastly, let us not, from an excited fancy and a vain longing after the glories of other days, forget the advantages which we have. No need to have the troubles of Apostles in order to attain their faith. Even in the quietest times we may rise to high holiness, if we improve the means given us. Trials come when we forget mercies; to remind us of them, and to fit us to enjoy and use them suitably.

SERMON XVII.

THE FEAST OF ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES, THE APOSTLES.

THE GOSPEL WITNESSES.

2 COR. xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

It has pleased Almighty God in His great mercy, to give us accumulated evidence of the truth of the Gospel; to send out His Witnesses again and again, Prophet after Prophet, Apostle after Apostle, miracle after miracle, that reason might be brought into captivity, as well as faith rewarded, by the fulness of His revelations. The double Festival which we are now celebrating, reminds us of this. Our service is this day distinguished by the commemoration of two Apostles, who are associated together in our minds in nothing except in their being Apostles, in both of them being Witnesses, separate Witnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Thus this union, however originating, of the Feast Days of Apostles, who are not especially connected in Scripture, will serve to remind us of the diversity and number of the Witnesses by whom one and the same Sacred Truth has been delivered to us.

But, further than this. Even the twelve Apostles, many as they were, form not the whole company of the Witnesses vouchsafed to us. In order more especially to confirm to us, that the Word has really become incarnate, and has sojourned among men, another distinct Witness is vouchsafed to us in the person of St. Paul. What could be needed beyond the preaching of the Twelve? they all were attendants upon Christ, they had heard His words, they had imbibed His Spirit; and, as agreeing one and all in the matter of their testimony, they afforded full evidence to those who required it, that, though their Master wrote not His Gospel for us with His own finger, nevertheless we have it whole and entire. Yet He did more than this. When the time came for publishing it to the world at large, while He gradually initiated their minds into the full graciousness of the New Covenant, as reaching to Gentile as well as Jew, He raised up to Himself by direct miracle and inspiration, a fresh and independent Witness of it from among His persecutors; so that from that time, the Dispensation had (as it were) a second beginning, and went forward upon a twofold foundation, the teaching, on the one hand, of the Apostles of the Circumcision, and of St. Paul on the other. Two schools of Christian doctrine forthwith existed; if I may use the word "school," to denote a difference, not of doctrine itself, but of history, between the Apostles. Of the Gentile school, were St. Luke, St. Clement, and others, followers of St. Paul. Of the School of the Circumcision, St. Peter, and still more, St. John; St. James, and we may add, St. Philip. St. James is known to belong to the latter, in his history as Bishop of Jerusalem; and, though little is known of St. Philip, yet what is known of him, indicates that he too is to be ranked with St. John, whom he followed, (as history informs us,) in observing the Jewish rule of celebrating the Easter Feast, and not the tradition of St. Peter and St. Paul. I propose upon this Festival, to set before you some considerations which arise out of this view of the Scripture history.

Christianity was, and was not, a new religion, when first preached to the world; it seemed to supersede, but it was merely the fulfilment, the due development and maturity of the Jewish Law, which, in one sense, vanished away, in another, was perpetuated for ever. This need not be proved here; I will but refer you, by way of illustration, to the language of Prophecy, as (for instance) to the forty-ninth chapter of the Book of Isaiah, in which the Jewish Church is comforted in her afflictions, by the promise of her propagation and triumphs (that is, in her Christian form) among the Gentiles. "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of

her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold ; all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doth The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? Behold, I will lift up Mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up My standard to the people ; . . and kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers." The Jewish Church, then, was not superseded, though the Nation was ; it merely changed into the Christian, and thus was at once the same, and not the same, as it had been before.

Such being the double aspect of God's dealings towards His Church, when the time came for His exhibiting it in its new form as a Catholic, not a local Institution, He was pleased to make a corresponding change in the internal ministry of the Dispensation ; imposing upon St. Paul the particular duty of formally delivering and adapting to the world at large, that Old Essential Truth, the guardianship of which He had already committed to St. James and St. John. In consequence of this accidental difference of office, superficial readers of Scripture have sometimes spoken as if there were some real difference between the respective doctrines of those favoured Instruments of Providence. Unbelievers have objected that St. Paul introduced a new religion, such as Jesus never taught ; and, on the other hand, there are Christians who maintain, that St. Paul's doctrine is peculiarly the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and intended to supersede both our Lord's recorded words, and those of His original follows. Now a very remarkable circumstance it certainly is, that Almighty God has thus made two beginnings to His Gospel ; and, when we have advanced far enough in sacred knowledge to see how they harmonize together, and concur in that wonderful system, which Primitive Christianity presents, and which was built on them both, we shall find abundant matter of praise in this Providential arrangement. But, at first there doubtless is something which needs explanation ; for we see in matter of fact, that different classes of religionists, do build their respective doctrines upon the one foundation and the other, upon the Gospels and upon St. Paul's Epistles ; the more enthusiastic upon the latter, the cold, proud, and heretical, upon the former ; and though we may be quite sure that no part of Scripture favours either coldness or fanaticism, and, in particular, may

zealously repel the impiety, as well as the daring perverseness, which would find countenance for an imperfect Creed in the heavenly words of the Evangelists, yet the very fact that hostile parties do agree in dividing the New Testament into about the same two portions, is just enough at first sight to show that there is some difference or other, whether in tone or doctrine, which needs accounting for.

This state of the case, whether a difficulty or not, may, I conceive, any how be turned into an evidence in behalf of the truth of Christianity. Some few remarks shall here be made to explain my meaning; nor is it superfluous to direct attention to the subject; for, though points of evidence seldom avail to the conversion of unbelievers, they are always edifying and instructive to Christians, as confirming their faith, and filling them with admiration, and praise of God's marvellous works, which have more and more the stamp of Truth upon them, the deeper we examine them. This was the effect produced on the Apostles' minds by their own miracles, and on the Saints' in the Apocalypse by the sight of God's judgments; prompting them to cry out in awe and thankfulness, "Lord, Thou art God, which hast made Heaven and earth!" "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints!"*

My remark then is simply this;—that, supposing an essential unanimity of teaching can be shown to exist between the respective writings of St. Paul and his brethren, then the existing difference, whatever it is, whether of phraseology of subject, or of historical origin, in a word, the difference of school, only makes that agreement the more remarkable, and after all only guarantees them as two independent Witnesses to the same Truth. Now to illustrate this argument.

I suppose the points of difference between St. Paul and the Twelve will be considered to be as follows:—that St. Paul, on his conversion, "conferred not with flesh and blood,† neither went up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before him;"—that, on the face of Scripture, there appears some sort of difference in viewing doctrine between St. Paul and the original Apostles, that St. Paul on one occasion "withstood Peter to the face," and says that "those who seemed to be somewhat" referring apparently to James and John, "in conference added nothing to him,"‡ and St. Peter, on the other hand, observes, that in St. Paul's Epistles there "are some things hard to be understood," while St. James would even seem to qualify St. Paul's doctrine concerning the pre-eminence of faith;§ that St. James, not to mention St. John,

* Acts iv. 24. Rev. xv. 3. † Gal. i. 16, 17. ‡ Gal. ii. 6. 11.

§ 2 Peter iii. 16. James ii. 14—26.

was stationary, having taken on himself a local episcopate, while St. Paul was subjected to what are now called missionary labours, and laid the foundation of churches without undertaking the government of any of them;—that St. Paul speaks with especial earnestness concerning the abolition of the Jewish Law, and the admission of the Gentiles into the Church, subjects not prominently put forward by the other Apostles;—that St. Paul declares distinctly and energetically, that we are elected to salvation by God's free grace, and justified by faith,* and traces out, in the way of system, all Christian holiness and spiritual mindedness from this beginning; whereas, St. James says we are justified by works,† St. John that we shall be “judged according to our works,” and St. Peter that “the Father judgeth according to every man's work, without respect of persons,”‡ phrases which are but symbols of the general character of their own and our Lord's teaching; lastly, that there is more expression of kindled and active affections towards God and towards man in St. Paul's writings than in those of his brethren. This is not the place to explain what needs explaining in this list of contrasts; nor indeed is there any real difficulty at all (I may say) in reconciling the one side with the other, where the heart is right and the judgment fairly clear and steady. It has often been done most satisfactorily. But let us take them as they stand, prior to all explanation; let a disputer make the most of them. So much at least is proved, that St. Paul and St. James were two independent witnesses (whether concordant or not) of the gospel doctrines; which is abundantly confirmed by all those circumstances which objectors sometimes enlarge upon, St. Paul's peculiar education, connexions, and history. Take these differences at the worst, and then on the other hand take account of the wonderful agreement after all in opinion, manner of thought, feeling, and conduct, nay, in religious vocabulary, between the two Schools, (as I have called them,)—most wonderful, considering that the very idea of the Christian system in all its parts was virtually a new thing in the particular generation in which it was promulgated,—and if it does not impress us with the conviction, that an Unseen Hand, a Divine Presence, was in the midst of it, controlling the human instruments of His work, and ruling it that they should and must agree in speaking His Word, in spite of whatever differences of natural disposition and education, surely we may as well deny the agency of the Creator, His power, wisdom and goodness, in the appointments of the material world.—The following are some instances of the kind of agreement I speak of.

* Rom. v. 1.

† Jam. ii. 24

‡ Rev. xx. 13. 1 Pet. i. 17.

1. Take the New Testament, as we have received it. It deserves notice, that in spite of what partisans would desire, after all we cannot divide its contents between the two Schools under consideration. Admitting there were two principles at work in the development of the Christian Church, they are inextricably united as regards the documents of faith; so that the modern parties in question, whether their particular view be right or wrong, are at least attempting a return to a state prior to the existence of the New Testament. Consider the Epistle to the Hebrews,—which would be sufficient evidence, were there no other, of the identity of St. Paul's doctrine with St. James's. Be as disputatious as you will about its author; still it comes at least from the School of St. Paul, if not from that Apostle himself. The parallelisms between it and his acknowledged writings, forbid any other supposition. Now look through it from beginning to end, observe well its exhortations to obedience, its warnings against apostacy, its solemn announcement of the terrors of the Gospel, and further its honourable treatment of the Jewish Law, which it sets forth as fulfilled, (after our Saviour's doctrine,) not disrespectfully superseded by the Gospel, and then say whether this Epistle alone be not a wonderful monument of the essential unity of the Gospel creed among all its original disseminators.

Again, consider the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, which are confessedly St. Paul's, and try to discriminate if you can, between the ethical character which they display, and that of St. James's Epistle. Next observe the position of St. Luke's writings in the inspired volume, an Evangelist following the language of St. Matthew, yet the associate of St. Paul. Examine the speeches of St. Paul in the book of Acts, and consider whether he is not at once the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the fellow disciple of those who had attended our Lord's Ministry.* Consider too the history of St. Peter, and see whether the revelations made to him in order to the conversion of Cornelius, do not form a link between "St. Paul's Gospel" and that of his earlier brethren. Lastly, count up the particular parts of St. Paul's writings, in which that Apostle may be supposed to speak a different doctrine from the rest, and determine their extent and number. Are there much more than nine chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, four of that to the Galatians, three in the Ephesians, a passage in the Colossians, and a few verses in the Philippians? Are there not in other chapters of these very Epistles clear and explicit statements, running counter to these supposed peculiarities, agreeing with St. James, and so protesting (as it were) against

* Vide c. g. Acts **xx.** 25. **xxviii.** 31.

those who would put asunder Apostles whom God has joined together? These shall be presently instanced; but for the moment concede the whole of these separate documents,— yet you cannot make more than five out of fourteen, which is the whole number of his Epistles; and these, however sacred and authoritative, are not after all of greater prominence and dignity than some of the remaining nine. It would appear then, from the very face of the New Testament, that the differences between St. Paul's doctrine and that of his brethren, (whatever they were,) admitting of an amalgamation, as far as Christian Teaching went, from the moment that office was first exercised in the Church.

2. In the case of the original Apostles, the intention of delivering and explaining their Divine Master's teaching cannot be mistaken. Now, of course, St. Paul, professing to preach Christ's Gospel, could not but avow such an intention also; but it should be noticed, considering that he was not with our Lord on earth, how he devotes himself to the sole thought of Him; that is, it *would* be remarkable, were not St. Paul divinely chosen and called, as we believe to have been. Simon Magus professed to be a Christian, yet his aim was that of exalting himself. It was quite possible for St. Paul to have acknowledged Christ generally as his Master, and still not practically to have preached Christ. Yet how full he is of his Saviour! He could not be more so, if he had attended Him all through His Ministry. The thought of Christ is the one thought in which he *lives*; it is the fervent love, the devoted attachment, the zeal and reverence of one who had "heard and seen, and looked upon and handled, the Word of Life."* What a remarkable attestation is here to the Sovereignty of the Unseen Saviour! What was Paul, and what was James "but ministers," by whom the world believed on Him? They clearly were nothing beyond this. This is a striking fulfilment of our Lord's declaration concerning the ministration of the Spirit; "He shall glorify Me."† St. John records it; St. Paul exemplifies it.

It is remarkable too, how St. Paul concurs with the other Apostles in referring to our Lord's words and actions, though much opportunity for this does not occur in his writings; that is, it is plain, that he was not exalting a mere name or idea, any more than the rest, but a Person, a really existing Master. For instance, St. John says, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you;" and St. Peter, "This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount;" again, "We are witnesses of all things which he did."‡

* 1 John i. 1. † John xvi. 14.

‡ 1 John i. 3. 2 Pet. i. 18. Acts x. 39.

In like manner St. Paul enumerates, as his "Gospel," not mere principles of religion, but the facts of Christ's life, recurring to that very part of the Dispensation, in which he was inferior to his brethren. "I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, . . . was buried . . . rose again the third day, and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve, after that . . . of about five hundred brethren at once . . . after that . . . of James, then of all the Apostles;" he adds with expressions of self-abasement, "And last of all, He was seen of me."* Again in his directions for administering the Lord's Supper, he refers carefully to our Lord's manner of ordaining it, as recorded in the Gospels; again, in the seventh chapter of the same Epistle, there would seem a repeated reference to our Lord's words in the Gospel; "Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord." In the same chapter the verse beginning, "This I speak for your own profit," has been supposed with reason to refer to St. Luke's account of Martha's complaint of Mary, and our Lord's speech thereupon. In his first Epistle to Timothy, he alludes to our Lord's appearance before Pilate. In his farewell address to the Elders of Ephesus he has preserved one of His sayings which the Gospels do not contain; "It is more blessed to give than to receive."† And in the Epistle to the Hebrews reference is made to Christ's agony in the garden.

3. The doctrine of the Incarnation, or the Gospel Economy, as embracing the two great truths of the Divinity of Christ and the Atonement, was not (as far as we know) clearly revealed, during our Lord's ministry. Yet, observe how close is St. Paul's agreement with St. John. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh."—"Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet humbled Himself, being made in the likeness of men." St. John calls Christ "the Only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father;" and St. Paul, "the First-begotten." St. John says, that He hath "declared the Father," and in His own sacred words, that "he that hath seen Him, hath seen the Father;" St. Paul declares that He is "the Image of the Invisible God,"—"the brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person." St. John says, "All things were made by Him;" St. Paul, that "By Him God made the worlds." Further, St. John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;"—St. Paul, that "in Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins;"—St. John, that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,

* 1 Cor. xv. 3—8.

† Acts xx. 35.

Jesus Christ the righteous ;"—St. Paul, that He "is even at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us ;"—St. John, that "He is the propitiation not for our sins only, but also for those of the whole world ;"—St. Paul, that He has "reconciled" Jew and Gentile "in one body by the cross."*

Now, considering the mysteriousness of these doctrines, the probability that there would be some diversity of teaching, in the case of two different minds, and the actual differences existing among various sects at the time, I must consider this exact accordance between St. John and St. Paul, (men to all appearance as unlike each other by nature as men could be,) to be little short of a demonstration of the reality of the divine doctrines to which they witness. "The testimony of two men is true ;" and still more clearly so in this case, supposing, (what unbelievers may maintain, but they alone,) that any rivalry of Schools existed between these Holy Apostles.

4. To continue our review. St. John and St. Paul both put forward the doctrine of Regeneration, both connect it with Baptism, both denounce the world as sinful and lost. They both teach the peculiar privilege of Christians, as God's adopted children, and make the grant of this and all other privileges, depend to faith.† Now the ideas and the terms employed are peculiar ; and, with all allowance for what might have been anticipated by former Dispensations and existing Schools of religion, yet, could it be shown, that ever so much of this doctrine was already familiar to the Jewish Church, this does not account for the unanimity with which they respectively adopt and modify it. I add some parallel texts on this part of the subject. St. John delivers our Saviour's prediction ; "If I depart, I will send the Comforter unto you ; He will guide you into all truth ;"—St. Paul, "God hath revealed (the mysteries of the Gospel) unto us by His Spirit ;" "All these (gifts) worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." St. Paul says, "He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God ;"—St. John, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." St. John, in accordance with the teaching of his Lord, declares, "There is a sin unto death ; I do not say that a man shall pray for it ;" and St. Paul, that

* John i. 1. 14. Phil. ii. 5—8. John i. 18. Heb. i. 6. John i. 18. xiv. 9. Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 3. John i. 3. Heb. i. 2. 1 John i. 7. Col. i. 14. 1 John ii. 1. Rom. viii. 34. 1 John ii. 2. Ephes. ii. 16.

† John iii. 3—5. 16. 19. 1 John iii. 1. v. 19. Rom. iii. 19. v. 1, 2. viii. 14, 15. Tit. iii. 5, &c.

"it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."*

5. We all recollect St. Paul's praise of charity as the fulfilling of the Law, and the characteristic precept of the Gospel. Yet is not the pre-eminent importance of it as clearly set forth by St. John, when he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," and the nature of it by St. James in his description of "the wisdom that is from above?" Again, it is observable, that our Lord's precept, adopted from the Law, of our loving our neighbour as ourselves, is handed down at once by St. Paul and St. James.†

6. We know that an especial stress is laid by our Lord on the duty of Almsgiving. St. John and St. James follow Him in so doing;‡ and St. Paul likewise. That Apostle's words, in the Galatians, are especially in point here, as expressly acknowledging this agreement between himself and his brethren. "When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision; *only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*"||

7. Self-denial, mortification of life, bearing our cross, are especially insisted on by Christ. St. Paul delivers clearly and strongly the same doctrine, declaring that he himself was "crucified with Christ," and "died daily."§ The duty of Fasting may here be mentioned, as one in which St. Paul unhesitatingly enters into and enforces our Lord's religious system.

8. I need not observe how urgent and constant is St. Paul in his exhortations to Intercession; yet, St. James equals him in his short epistle, which contains a passage longer and more emphatic than any which can be found in St. Paul.¶ Again, both Apostles insist on the practice of sacred Psalmody as a duty. St. James, "Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." St. Paul, "Speaking to each other in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs."**

9. St. Paul makes much of the Holy Eucharist; nay, to him the Church is indebted for the direct and clear proof we possess of the sacramental virtue of that Ordinance. Far different is the conduct of

* John xvi. 7. 13. 1 Cor. ii. 10. xii. 11. 2 Cor. i. 21. 1 John ii. 21. v. 16. Heb. vi. 4—6.

† 1 John iii. 14. James iii. 17. Rom. xiii. 9. James ii. 8.

‡ 1 John iii. 17. James ii. 15, 16.

|| Gal. ii. 9, 10.

§ Gal. ii. 20. 1 Cor. xv. 31.

¶ Eph. vi. 18. 1 Thess. v. 17. James v. 14—18.

** James v. 13. Eph. v. 19.

innovators; who are impatient of nothing more than of ordinances which they find established. He also recognizes the obligation of the Lord's day,* he being the Apostle who denounces, as other Jewish rites, so also the Sabbath.

10. St. Jude bids us "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints." In like manner, St. Paul enjoins Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words, which he had heard of him;" and Titus, to "hold fast the faithful word as he had been taught, that he might be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."† St. Paul bids us "speak the Truth in love;" St. John says, he "loves Gaius in the Truth."‡

11. It is observable that our Lord speaks of His Gospel being preached, not chiefly as a means of converting, but as a witness against the world. This is confessedly a remarkable ground to be taken by the Founder of a new religion. "The Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations."|| Accordingly, He Himself witnessed even before the heathen Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth."§ Yet, surely it is still more remarkable, that the Apostle of the Gentiles should take up precisely the same view, even referring to our Lord's Confession before Pilate, when giving Timothy his charge to preach the Truth, declaring, that the Gospel is "a savour of death unto death," as well as "of life unto life," and foretelling the growth of "evil men and seducers" after his departure.¶

12. Observe the agreement of sentiment in the following texts: St. James, taught by his Lord and Master, says, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." St. Paul nearly in the same words, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."** Again, did we not know whence the following passages come, should we not assign them to St. James? "God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath for there is no respect of persons with God." This, as well as the text just cited, is to be found in the opening of that Epistle, in which St. Paul appears most to differ from St. James; now observe how he closes it. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? And why dost thou

* Acts xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

† Jude 3. 2 Tim. i. 13. Titus i. 9.

‡ Eph. iv. 15. 3 John 1.

|| Matt. xxiv. 14. xviii. 37.

§ John xviii. 37.

¶ 1 Tim. vi. 13. 2 Cor. ii. 16. 2 Tim. iii. 13.

** James i. 22. Rom. ii. 13.

set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Again, in another Epistle: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."^{*}

13. St. John, after our Lord's example, implies especial praise upon those who follow an unmarried life,—involving the letter in the spirit, as is frequent in Scripture.† "These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins; these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." St. Paul gives more direct praise to the same state, and gives the same reason for its especial blessedness: "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord I speak this for your own profit that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction."[†]

14. St. Paul says, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;" St. Peter in like manner, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Both are after our Lord's exhorta-

* Rom. ii. 6—8. 11; xiv. 10—12. 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

† Vide Hos. xiii. 14. John xi. 23. 40; xiii. 8; xviii. 9. And especially, as being a parallel case, Matt. xviii 3—6, and so again, Matt. x. 38. Rev. vii. 14.—The parallel is instructively brought out in separate passages in the Christian Year:

"Yet in that throng of selfish hearts untrue,
Thy sad eye rests upon Thy faithful few,
Children and childlike souls are there," &c.—*Advent*.

..... "There hangs a radiant coronet,
All gemm'd with pure and living light,
Too dazzling for a sinner's sight,
Prepared for virgin souls, and them
Who seek the martyr's diadem.
Nor deem, who, to that bliss aspire,
Must win their way through blood and fire," &c.

Wednesday before Easter.

In other words, Childhood, Virginity, Martyrdom, are made in Scripture at once the Types and Standards of religious Perfection, as they are represented in the three Saints' Days following Christmas Day,—St. Stephen's, St. John's, and Holy Innocents'. So again, Poverty, Luke vi. 20; xii. 33. Matt. xi. 5, with Matt. v. 3. But this rule of interpretation, and the light it throws upon Gospel duties and the Christian character, cannot be more than alluded to in a note.

† Rev. xiv. 4. 1 Cor. vii. 32. 35.

tion, "Be not careful for the morrow, for the morrow shall take care for the things of itself."*

15. Lastly, as Christ foretells the approaching visitations of the Jewish Church, and the necessity of looking out for them, so St. Peter declares, "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." St. James, "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."† And St. Paul in like manner, "Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand."

These instances may suffice by way of pointing out the argument for the truth of Christianity, which I conceive to lie in the *historical* difference existing between the respective Schools of St. Paul and St. James. Such a difference there is, as every one must grant; I mean that St. Paul did, as a matter of fact, begin his preaching upon his own independent revelations. And thus, however we may be able (as assuredly every Christian is gradually able, in proportion to his diligence and prayer) to reconcile and satisfy himself as regards St. Paul's apparent discordances in doctrine from the rest of the Apostles, so much after all must remain, just enough, that is, to build the foregoing argument upon. At the same time, as if to ensure even the historical harmony of the whole dispensation, we are allowed to set against our information concerning this separate origin of the two Apostolical Schools, the following facts; first, that St. Paul ever considered himself ecclesiastically subordinate to the Church at Jerusalem, and to St. James, as the book of Acts shows us; next, that St. John, the beloved disciple, who was in Christ before him, was appointed to outlive him, and, as a faithful steward, to seal up, avouch, and deliver over inviolate to the Church after him, the pure and veritable teaching of his Lord.

As to the point of *doctrinal* agreement and difference which I have been employed in ascertaining, it is scarcely necessary to observe, that beyond controversy the agreement is in essentials, the nature and office of the Mediator, the gifts which He vouchsafes to us, and the temper of mind and the duties required of a Christian; whereas the difference of doctrine between them, even admitting there is a difference, relates only at the utmost to the Divine counsels, the sense in which the Jewish law is abolished, and the condition of justification, whether faith or good works. I would not (God forbid!) undervalue these or any other questions on which inspiration has spoken; it is our duty to search diligently after every jot and tittle of the Truth graciously re-

* Phil. iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 7. Matt. vi. 34.

† 1 Pet. iv. 7. Phil. iv. 5. Jam. v. 8.

vealed to us, and to maintain it : but I am here speaking as to an unbeliever, and he must confess that, viewing the Gospel Creed in what may be called its historical proportions, a difference of opinion as to these latter subjects cannot detract from that real and substantial agreement of System, visible in the course of doctrine which the Two Witnesses respectively deliver.

Next, speaking as a Christian, who will admit neither inconsistency to exist between the inspired documents of faith, nor points of trivial importance in the revelation, I observe notwithstanding, that the foregoing argument affords us additional certainty respecting the characteristic doctrines as well as the truth of Christianity. An agreement between St. Paul and St. John in behalf of a certain doctrine is an agreement not of mere texts, but of separate Witnesses, an evidence of the prominence of the doctrine delivered in the Gospel system. In this way, if in no other, we learn the momentous character of some particular tenets of revelation which heretics have denied, as the Eternity, or again, the Personality of the Divine Word.

Further, we are thus permitted more clearly to ascertain the main outlines of the Christian *character* ; for instance, that love is its essence,—its chief characteristics, resignation, and composure of mind, neither anxious for the morrow, nor hoping from this world,—and its duties, alms-giving, self-denial, prayer and praise.

Lastly, the very circumstance that Almighty God has chosen this mode of introducing the Gospel into the world, I mean this employment of a double agency, opens a wide field of thought, had we light to trace out the parallel providences which seem to lie amid the intricacies of His dealings with mankind. As it is, we can but gaze with the Apostle in wonder and adoration upon the mystery of His counsels. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? Or who hath been His counsellor ? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”*

* Rom. xi. 33—36.

SERMON XVIII.

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

MYSTERIES IN RELIGION.

Rom. viii. 34.

It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

THE Ascension of our Lord and Saviour is an event ever to be commemorated with joy and thanksgiving, for St. Paul tells us in the text that He ascended to the right hand of God, and there makes intercession for us. Hence it is our comfort to know, that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins."* As the Jewish High Priest, after the solemn sacrifice for the people on the great day of Atonement, went into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the victim, and sprinkled it upon the Mercy-Seat, so Christ has entered into Heaven itself, to present (as it were) before the Throne that sacred Tabernacle which was the instrument of His passion,—His pierced hands and wounded side,—in token of the atonement which He has effected for the sins of the world.

Wonder and awe must always mingle with the thankfulness which the revealed dispensation of mercy raises in our minds. And this, indeed, is an additional cause of thankfulness, that Almighty God has disclosed to us enough of His high Providence to raise such sacred and reverent feelings. Had He merely told us that he had pardoned us, we should had overabundant cause for blessing and praising Him; but in showing us somewhat of the means, in vouchsafing to tell what cannot wholly be told, in condescending to abase heavenly things to the weak and stammering tongues of earth, He has enlarged our gratitude, yet sobered it with fear. We are allowed with the Angels to obtain a glimpse of the mysteries of Heaven, "to rejoice with trembling."

* 1 John ii. 1, 2.

Therefore, so far from considering the Truths of the Gospel as a burden, because they are beyond our understanding, we shall rather welcome them and exult in them, nay, and feel an antecedent stirring of heart towards them, for the very reason that they are above us. Under these feelings I will attempt to suggest to you on the present Festival some of the incentives to wonder and awe, humility, implicit faith, and adoration, supplied by the Ascension of Christ.

1. First, Christ's Ascension to the right hand of God is marvellous because it is a sure token that heaven is a certain fixed place, and not a mere state. That bodily presence of the Saviour which the Apostles handled, is not here; it is elsewhere, it is in heaven. This contradicts the notions of cultivated and speculative minds; and humbles the reason. Philosophy considers it more rational to suppose that Almighty God, as being a spirit, is in every place; and in no one place more than another. It would teach, if it dare, that heaven is a mere state of blessedness; but to be consistent, it ought to go on to deny, with the ancient heretics, referred to by St. John, that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," and maintain that His presence on earth was a mere vision; for, certain it is, He who appeared on earth went up from the earth, and a cloud received Him out of His Apostles' sight. And here again, an additional difficulty occurs, on minutely considering the subject. Whither did He go? beyond the sun? beyond the fixed stars? Did he traverse the immeasurable space which extends beyond them all? Again, what is meant by *ascending*? Philosophers will say they there is no difference between *down* and *up*, as regards the sky; yet, whatever difficulties the word may occasion, we can hardly take upon us to decide that it is a mere popular expression, consistently with the reverence due to the Sacred Record.

And thus we are led on to consider, how different are the character and effect of the Scripture notices of the structure of the physical world, from those which philosophers deliver. I am not deciding whether or not the one and the other are reconcilable; I merely say their respective *effect* is different. And when we have deduced what we deduce by our reason from the study of visible nature, and then read what we read in his inspired word, and find the two apparently discordant, this is the feeling I think we ought to have on our minds;—not an impatience to do what is beyond our powers, to weigh evidence, sum up, balance, decide, and reconcile, to arbitrate between the two voices of God,—but a sense of the utter nothingness of worms such as we are, of our plain and absolute incapacity to contemplate things *as they really are*, a perception of our emptiness, before the great Vision of God, of our "comeliness being turned into corruption, and our retaining no strength," a

conviction, that what is put before us, in nature or in grace, though true in such a full sense that we dare not infringe it, yet is but an intimation useful for particular purposes, useful for practice, useful in its department, "until the day break and the shadows flee away," useful in such a way that both the one and the other representation may at once be used, as two languages, as two separate approximations towards the Awful Unknown Truth, such as will not mislead us in their respective provinces. And thus while we use the language of science, without jealousy, for scientific purposes, we may confine it to these; and repel and reprove its upholders, should they attempt to exalt it and to "stretch it beyond its measure." In its own limited round it has its use, nay, may be made to fill a higher ministry, and stand as a proselyte under the shadow of the Temple; but it must not dare profane the inner courts, in which the ladder of Angels is fixed for ever, reaching even to the Throne of God, and "Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

I will but remind you on this part of the subject, that our Lord is to come from heaven "in like manner" as He went; that He is to come "in clouds," that "every eye shall see Him," and "all tribes of the earth wail because of Him." Attempt to solve this prediction, according to the received theories of science, and you will discover their shallowness. They are unequal to the depth of the problem.

2. I have made the foregoing remark in order to impress upon you the mystery with which we are encompassed all about, such as not merely to attach to one or two truths of religion, but extending to almost every sacred fact, and to every action of our lives. With the same view, let me observe upon the doctrine which accompanies the fact of the Ascension. Christ, we are told, has gone up on high "to present Himself before the face of God for us." He has "entered by His own blood once for all into the Holy place, having effected eternal redemption." "He ever liveth to make intercession for those who come unto God by Him; He hath a priesthood which will not pass from Him." We have such a High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a Minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

These and similar passages refer us to the rites of the Jewish law. They contain notice of the type, but what is the Antitype? We can give no precise account of it. For consider; *why* was it that Christ ascended on high? With what object? What is His work? What

* Heb. ix. 12. 24, 25. vii. 24, 25. viii. 1, 2.

is the meaning of His interceding for us in heaven? We know that, whatever He does, it is the gracious reality of the Mosaic figure. The High Priest entering with the atoning blood into the Holiest, was a representation of Christ's gracious deed in our behalf. But what is that deed? We know what the shadow is; what is the substance? The death of Christ answers to the Jewish rite of atonement; how does He vouchsafe to fulfil the rite of Intercession? Instead of explaining, Scripture does but continue to answer us in the language of the type; even to the last it veils His deed under the ancient figure.* Shall we therefore explain away its language as merely figurative, which (as the word is now commonly understood) is next to saying it has no meaning at all? Far from it! Clouds and darkness are round about Him. We are not given to see into the secret shrine in which God dwells. Before Him stand the Seraphim, veiling their faces. Christ is within the veil. We must not search curiously what is His present office, what is meant by His pleading His sacrifice, and by His perpetual intercession for us. And, since we do not know, we will studiously keep to the figure given us in Scripture: we will not attempt to interpret it, or change the wording of it, being wise above what is written. We will not neglect it, because we do not understand it. We will hold it as a Mystery, or (what was anciently called) a Truth Sacramental; that is, a high invisible grace lodged in an outward form, a precious possession to be piously and thankfully guarded for the sake of the heavenly reality contained in it. Thus much we see in it, the pledge of a doctrine which reason cannot understand, viz. of the influence of the prayer of faith upon the Divine counsels. The Intercessor directs or stays the hand of the Unchangeable and Sovereign Governor of the World; being at once the meritorious cause and the earnest of the intercessory power of His brethren. "Christ rose again for our justification," "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," are both infinite mercies, and deep mysteries.

3. Further still, consider our Saviour's words:—"It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." He does not tell us, why it was that His absence was the condition of the Holy Spirit's presence. "If I depart," He says, "I will send Him unto you." "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."† To the same purpose are the following texts: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, *because* I go unto My Father." "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice,

* Rev. viii. 3, 4.

† John xvi. 7. xiv. 16.

because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I." "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."* Now proud and curious reason might seek to know why He could not "pray the Father," without going to Him; why He must depart in order to send the Spirit. But faith, without asking for one ray of light more than is given, muses over the wonderful system of Providence, as seen in this world, which is ever connecting events, between which man sees no necessary bond. The whole system of what is called cause and effect, is one of mystery; and this instance, if it may be called one, supplies abundant matter of praise and adoration to a pious mind. It suggests to us, equally with the topics which have already come before us, how very much our knowledge of God's ways is but on the surface. What are those deep hidden reasons why Christ went and the Spirit came? Marvellous and glorious, beyond our understanding! Let us worship in silence; meanwhile, let us jealously maintain this, and every other portion of our Creed, lest, by dropping jot or tittle, we suffer the truths concealed therein to escape from us.

Moreover, this departure of Christ, and coming of the Holy Ghost, leads our minds with great comfort to the thought of many lower dispensations of Providence towards us. He, who according to His inscrutable will, sent first His Co-equal Son, and then His Eternal Spirit, acts with deep counsel, which we may surely trust, when He sends from place to place, those earthly instruments which carry on His purposes. This is a thought which is particularly soothing as regards the loss of friends; or of especially gifted men, who seem in their day the earthly support of the Church. For what we know, their removal hence is as necessary for the furtherance of the very objects we have at heart, as was the departure of our Saviour.

Doubtless, "it is expedient" they should be taken away; otherwise some great mercy will not come to us. They are taken away perchance to other duties in God's service, equally ministrative to the salvation of the elect, as earthly service. Christ went to intercede with the Father: we do not know, we may not boldly speculate,—yet, it may be, that Saints departed intercede, unknown to us, for the victory of the Truth upon earth; and their prayers above may be as really indispensable conditions of that victory, as the labours of those who remain among us. They are taken away for some purpose surely; their gifts are not lost to us; their soaring minds, the fire of their contem-

* John xiv. 12. 28. xx. 17.

plations, the sanctity of their desires, the vigour of their faith, the sweetness and gentleness of their affections, were not given without an object. Yea, doubtless, they are keeping up the perpetual chant in the shrine above, praying and praising God day and night in His Temple, like Moses upon the Mount, while Joshua and his host fight with Amalek. Can they be allotted greater blessedness, than to have a station after the pattern of that Saviour who is departed hence? Has He no power in the world's movements, because He is away? And though He is the Living and exalted Lord of all, and the government is on His shoulder, and they are but His servants, without strength of themselves, laid up moreover apart from the conflict of good and evil in the paradise of God, yet so much light as this is given us by the inspired pages of the Apocalypse, that they are interested in the fortunes of the Church. We read therein of the Martyrs crying with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" At another time, of the Elders "worshipping God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power and hast reigned; and the nations were wrathful, but Thy wrath is come." And again of the Saints, saying, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy judgments are made manifest."* Let us not forget that, though the prophecies of this sacred book may be still sealed up from us, yet the doctrines and precepts are not; and that we lose much both in the way of comfort and instruction; if we do not use it for the purposes of faith and obedience.

What has been now said about the Ascension of our Lord, comes to this; that we are in a world of mystery, with one bright Light before us, sufficient for our proceeding forward through all difficulties. Take away this Light, and we are utterly wretched,—we know not where we are, how we are sustained, what will become of us, and all that is dear to us, what we are to believe, and why we are in being. But with it we have all, and abound. Not to mention the duty and wisdom of implicit faith in the love of Him who made and redeemed us, what is nobler, what is more elevating and transporting, than the generosity of heart which risks every thing on God's word, dares the powers of evil to their worst efforts, and repels the illusions of sense and the artifices of reason, by confidence in the truth of Him who has ascended to the

* Rev. vi. 10. xi. 17, 18. xv. 3, 4.

right hand of the Majesty on high. What infinite mercy it is in Him, that He allows sinners such as we are, the privilege of acting the part of heroes rather than of penitents! Who are we "that we should be able" and have opportunity "to offer so willingly after this sort?"* — "Blessed," surely thrice blessed, "are they who have not seen and yet have believed!" We will not wish for sight; we will enjoy our privilege; we will triumph in the leave given us to go forward, "not knowing whither we go," knowing that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."† It is enough that our Redeemer liveth; that He has been on earth and will come again. On Him we venture our all; we can bear thankfully to put ourselves into His hands, our interests present and eternal, and the interests of all we love. Christ has died, "yea, rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from His love? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us "

S E R M O N X I X .

T H E F E A S T O F P E N T E C O S T .

T H E I N D W E L L I N G S P I R I T .

ROMANS viii. 9.

Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

God, the Son, has graciously vouchsafed to reveal the Father to His creatures from without; God, the Holy Ghost, by inward communications. Who can compare these separate works of condescension, either of them being beyond our understanding? We can but silently adore the Infinite Love which encompasses us on every side. The Son of God is called the Word, as declaring His glory throughout

* 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

† 1 John v. 4.

created nature, and impressing the evidence of it on every part of it. He has given us to read it in His works of goodness, holiness, and wisdom. He is the Living and Eternal Law of Truth and Perfection, the Image of God's unapproachable Attributes, which men have ever seen by glimpses on the face of the world, felt that it was sovereign, but knew not whether to say it was a fundamental Rule and self-existing Destiny, or the Offspring and Mirror of the Divine Will. Such has He been from the beginning, graciously sent forth from the Father to reflect His glory upon all things, distinct from Him, while mysteriously one with Him; and in due time visiting us with an infinitely deeper mercy, when for our redemption He humbled Himself to take upon Him that fallen nature which He had originally created after His own image.

The condescension of the Blessed Spirit is as incomprehensible as that of the Son. He has ever been the secret Presence of God within the Creation; a source of life amid the chaos, bringing out into form and order what was at first shapeless and void, and the voice of Truth in the hearts of all rational beings, tuning them into harmony with the intimations of God's Law which were externally made to them. Hence He is especially called the "life-giving" Spirit; being, (as it were,) the Soul of universal nature, the Strength of man and beast, the Guide of faith, the Witness against sin, the inward Light of patriarchs and prophets, the Grace abiding in the Christian soul, and the Lord and Ruler of the Church. Therefore, let us ever praise the Father Almighty, who is the first Source of all perfection, in and together with His co-equal Son and Spirit, through whose gracious ministrations we have been given to see "what manner of love" it is, wherewith the Father has loved us.

On this Festival I propose, as is suitable, to describe as scripturally as I can, the merciful office of God the Holy Ghost, towards us Christians; and I trust I may do so, with the sobriety and reverence which the subject demands.

The Holy Spirit has from the beginning pleaded with man. We read in the Book of Genesis, that, when evil began to prevail all over the earth before the flood, "the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man;"* implying that He had hitherto striven with his corruption. Again, when God took to Him a peculiar people, the Holy Spirit was pleased to be especially present with them. Nehemiah says, "Thou gavest also Thy Good Spirit to instruct them;"† and Isaiah, "They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit."‡ Further, He

* Gen. vi. 3.

† Neh. ix. 20.

‡ Isa. lxiii. 10.

manifested Himself as the source of various gifts, intellectual and extraordinary, in the Prophets, and others. Thus, at the time the Tabernacle was constructed, the Lord filled Bezaleel "with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works"* in metal, stone, and timber. At another time when Moses was oppressed with his labours, Almighty God vouchsafed to "take of the Spirit"† which was upon him, and to put it on seventy of the elders of Israel, that they might share the burden with him. "And it came to pass, that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease." These texts will be sufficient to remind you of many others, in which the gifts of the Holy Ghost are spoken of under the Jewish covenant. These were great mercies; yet, great as they were, they are as nothing compared with that surpassing grace with which we Christians are honoured; that great privilege of receiving into our hearts, not the mere gifts of the Spirit, but His very presence, Himself, by a real not a figurative indwelling.

When our Lord entered upon His Ministry, He acted as though He were a mere man, needing grace, and received the consecration of the Holy Spirit for our sakes. He became the Christ, or Anointed, that the Spirit might be seen to come from God, and to pass from Him to us. And, therefore, the heavenly Gift is not simply called the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, that we might clearly understand, that He comes to us from and instead of Christ. Thus St. Paul says, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts;" and our Lord breathed on His Apostles, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and He says elsewhere to them, "If I depart, I will send Him unto you."‡ Accordingly, this "Holy Spirit of promise" is called "the earnest of our inheritance," the seal and earnest of an Unseen Saviour;§ being the present pledge of Him who is absent,—or rather more than a pledge, for an earnest is not a mere token which will be taken from us when it is fulfilled, as a pledge might be, but a something in advance of what is one day to be given in full.

This must be clearly understood; for it would seem to follow, that if so, the Comforter which has come instead of Christ, must have vouchsafed to come in the same sense in which Christ came; I mean, that He has come, not merely in the way of gifts, or of influences, or

* Exod. xxxi. 3, 4.

† Numb. xi. 17, 25.

‡ Gal. iv. 6. John xx. 22. John xvi. 7.

§ Eph. i. 14. 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5.

of operations, as He came to the Prophets, for then Christ's going away would be a loss, and not a gain, and the Spirit's presence would be a mere pledge, not an earnest, but He comes to us as Christ came, by a real and personal visitation. I do not say we could have inferred this thus clearly by the mere force of the above cited texts; but it being actually so revealed to us in other texts of Scripture, we are able to see that it may be legitimately deduced from these. We are able to see that the Saviour, when once He entered into this world, never so departed as to suffer things to be as before He came; for He still is with us, not in mere gifts, but by the substitution of His Spirit for Himself, and that, both in the Church, and in the souls of individual Christians.

For instance, St. Paul says in the text, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God *dwell in you*." Again, "He shall quicken even your mortal bodies by His Spirit that *dwelleth in you*."—"Know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? "Ye are the Temple of the Living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." The same Apostle clearly distinguishes between the indwelling of the Spirit and His actual operations within us, when he says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;" and again, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."*

Here let us observe, before proceeding, what indirect evidence is afforded us in these texts of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Who can be personally present at once with every Christian, but God Himself? Who but He,—not merely ruling in the midst of the Church invisibly, as Michael might keep watch over Israel, or another Angel might be "the Prince of Persia,"—but really taking up His abode as one and the same in many separate hearts, so as to fulfil our Lord's words, that it was expedient that He should depart; Christ's bodily presence, which was limited to place, being exchanged for the manifold spiritual indwelling of the Comforter within us? This consideration suggests both the dignity of our Sanctifier, and the infinite preciousness of His office towards us.

To proceed: the Holy Ghost, I have said, dwells in body and soul, as in a Temple. Evil spirits indeed have power to possess sinners, but His indwelling is far more perfect; for He is all-knowing and omnipresent, He is able to search into all our thoughts, and penetrate into every motive of the heart. Therefore, He pervades us (if it may be so

* Rom. viii. 9. 11. 1 Cor. vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Rom. v. 5. viii. 16.

said) as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume the folds of some honourable robe ; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in Him, and He in us. It is plain that such an inhabitation brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvellous, far above the possession of mere gifts, exalts him inconceivably in the scale of beings, and gives him a place and an office which he had not before. In St. Peter's forcible language, he becomes "partaker of the Divine Nature," and has "power" or authority, as St. John says, "to become the son of God." Or, to use the words of St. Paul, "he is a new creation ; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." His rank is new ; his parentage and service new. He is "of God," and "is not his own," "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."*

This wonderful change from darkness to light, through the entrance of the Spirit into the soul, is called Regeneration, or the New Birth ; a blessing which, before Christ's coming, not even Prophets and righteous men possessed, but which is now conveyed to all men freely through the Sacrament of Baptism. By nature we are children of wrath ; the heart is sold under sin, possessed by evil spirits, and inherits death as its eternal portion. But by the coming of the Holy Ghost, all guilt and pollution are burned away as by fire, the devil is driven forth, sin, original and actual, is forgiven, and the whole man is consecrated to God. And this is the reason why He is called "the earnest" of that Saviour who died for us, and will one day give us the fulness of His own presence in Heaven. Hence too He is our "seal unto the day of redemption ;" for as the potter moulds the clay, so He impresses the Divine Image on us members of the household of God. And His work may truly be called Regeneration, for though the original nature of the soul is not destroyed, yet its past transgressions are pardoned once and for ever, and its source of evil stanchied and gradually dried up by the pervading Health and Purity which has set up its abode in it. Instead of its own bitter waters, a spring of health and salvation is brought within it ; not the mere streams of that fountain, "clear as crystal," which is before the Throne of God,† but, as our Lord says, "a well of water *in him*," in a man's heart, "springing up into everlasting life." Hence He elsewhere describes the heart as giving forth, not receiving, the streams of grace : "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of Living Water." St. John adds, "this spake He of the Spirit."‡

* 2 Pet. i. 4. John i. 12. 2 Cor. v. 17. 1 John iv. 4. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. 2 Tim. ii. 21.

† Rev. iv. 6. Ps. xlv. 4.

‡ John iv. 14. vii. 33, 39.

Such is the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost within us, applying to us individually the precious cleansing of Christ's blood in all its manifold benefits. Such is the great doctrine which we hold as a matter of faith, and without actual experience to verify it to us. Next, I must speak briefly concerning the manner in which the gift of grace manifests itself in the regenerate soul; a subject which I do not willingly take up, and which no Christian perhaps is ever able to consider without some effort, feeling that he thereby endangers either his reverence towards God, or his humility, but which the errors of this day and the confident tone of their advocates oblige us to dwell upon, lest truth should suffer by our silence.

The heavenly gift of the Spirit fixes the eyes of our mind upon the Divine Author of our salvation. By nature we are blind and carnal; but the Holy Ghost, by whom we are new-born, reveals to us the God of mercies, and bids us recognise and adore Him as our Father with a true heart. He impresses on us our Heavenly Father's image, which we lost when Adam fell, and disposes us to seek His presence by the very instinct of our new nature. He restores to us a portion of that freedom in willing and doing, of that uprightness and innocence in which Adam was created. He unites us to all holy beings, as before we had relationship with evil. He restores for us that broken bond, which, proceeding from above, connects together into one blessed family all that is any where holy and eternal, and separates it off from the rebel world which comes to nought. Being then the sons of God, and one with Him, our souls mount up to Him, and cry continually. This special characteristic of the regenerate soul is spoken of by St. Paul soon after the text. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Nor are we left to utter these cries to Him, in any vague uncertain way of our own; but He who sent the Spirit to dwell in us habitually, gave us also a form of words to sanctify the separate acts of our minds. Christ left His sacred Prayer to be the peculiar possession of His people, and the voice of the Spirit. If we examine it, we shall find in it the substance of that doctrine, to which St. Paul has given a name in the passage just quoted. We begin it by using our privilege of calling on Almighty God in express words as "our Father." We proceed, according to this beginning, in that waiting, trusting, adoring, resigned temper, which children ought to feel; looking towards Him, rather than thinking of ourselves; zealous for His honour rather than fearful about our safety; resting in His present help, not with eyes timorously glancing towards the future. His name, His kingdom, His will, are the great objects for the Christian to contemplate and make his portion, being stable and serene, and "complete in Him," as becoms

one who has the gracious presence of His Spirit within him. And, when he goes on to think of himself, he prays that he may be enabled to have towards others what God has shown towards himself, a spirit of forgiveness and loving-kindness. Thus he pours himself out on all sides, first looking up to catch the heavenly gift, but, when he gains it, not keeping it to himself, but diffusing "rivers of living water" to the whole race of man, thinking of self as little as may be, and desiring ill and destruction to nothing but that principle of temptation and evil, which is rebellion against God ;—lastly, ending, as he began, with the contemplation of His kingdom, power, and glory everlasting. This is the true "Abba Father," which the Spirit of adoption utters within the Christian's heart, the infallible voice of Him who "maketh intercession for the Saints in God's way." And if he has at times, for instance, amid trial or affliction, special visitations and comfortings from the Spirit, "plaints unutterable" within him, yearnings after the life to come, or bright and passing gleams of God's eternal election, and deep stirrings of wonder and thankfulness thence following, he thinks too reverently of "the secret of the Lord," to betray (as it were) His confidence, and by vaunting it to the world, to exaggerate it perchance into more than it was meant to convey ; but is silent, and ponders it as choice encouragement to his soul, meaning something, but he knows not how much.

2. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost raises the soul, not only to the thought of God, but of Christ also. St. John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." And our Lord Himself, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words ; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."* Now, not to speak of other and higher ways in which these texts are fulfilled, one surely consists in that exercise of faith and love in the thought of the Father and Son, which the Gospel, and the Spirit revealing it, furnish to the Christian. The Spirit came especially to "glorify" Christ ; and vouchsafes to be a shining Light within the Church and the individual Christian, reflecting the Saviour of the world in all His perfections, all His offices, all His works. He came for the purpose of unfolding what was yet hidden, while Christ was on earth ; and speaks on the house-tops what was delivered in closets, disclosing Him in the glories of His transfiguration, who once had no comeliness in His outward form, and was but a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. First, He inspired the Holy Evangelists to record the life of Christ, and directed them which of His words and

* 1 John i. 3. John xiv. 23.

works to select, which to omit; next He commented (as it were) upon these and unfolded their meaning in the Apostolic Epistles. The birth, the life, the death and resurrection of Christ, has been the text which He has illuminated. He has made history to be doctrine; telling us plainly, whether by St. John or St. Paul, that Christ's conception and birth was the real Incarnation of the Eternal Word, His life, "God manifest in the Flesh," His death and resurrection, the Atonement for sin, and the Justification of all believers. Nor was this all: He continued His sacred comment in the formation of the Church, superintending and overruling its human instruments, and bringing out our Saviour's words and works, and the Apostle's illustrations of them, into acts of obedience and permanent Ordinances, by the ministry of Saints and Martyrs. Lastly, He completes His gracious work by conveying this system of Truth, thus varied and expanded, to the heart of each individual Christian in whom He dwells. Thus He vouchsafes to edify the whole man in faith and holiness; "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* By His wonder-working grace all things tend to perfection. Every faculty of the mind, every design, pursuit, subject of thought, is hallowed in its degree by the abiding vision of Christ, as Lord, Saviour, and Judge. All solemn, reverent, thankful, and devoted feelings, all that is noble, all that is choice in the regenerate soul, all that is self-denying in conduct, and zealous in action, is drawn forth and offered up by the Spirit as a living sacrifice to the Son of God. And, though the Christian is taught not to think of himself above his measure, and dare not boast, yet he is also taught that the consciousness of the sin which remains in him, and infects his best services, should not separate him from God, but lead him to Him who can save; he reasons with St. Peter, "To whom should he go?" and, without daring to decide, or being impatient to be told how far he is able to consider as his own every Gospel privilege in its fulness, he gazes on them all with deep thought as the Church's possession, joins her triumphant hymns in honour of Christ, and listens wistfully to her voice in inspired Scripture, the voice of the Bride calling upon and blest in the Beloved.

3. St. John adds, after speaking of "our fellowship with the Father and His Son:" "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." What is fulness of joy but *peace*? Joy is tumultuous only when it is not full; but peace is the privilege of those who are "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

sea." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."* It is peace springing from trust and innocence, and then overflowing in love towards all around him. What is the effect of mere animal ease and enjoyment, but to make a man pleased with every thing which happens? "A merry heart is a perpetual feast;" and such is peculiarly the blessing of a soul rejoicing in the faith and fear of God. He who is anxious, thinks of himself, is suspicious of danger, speaks hurriedly, and has no time for the interests of others; he who lives in peace is at leisure, wherever his lot is cast. Such is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, whether in Jew or Greek, bond or free. He Himself perchance in His mysterious nature, is the Eternal Love whereby the Father and the Son have dwelt in each other, as ancient writers have believed; and what He is in Heaven, that He is abundantly on earth. He lives in the Christian's heart, as the never-failing fount of charity, which is the very sweetness of the living waters. For where He is, "there is liberty" from the tyranny of sin, from the dread, which the natural man feels, of an offended, unreconciled Creator. Doubt, gloom, impatience have been expelled; joy in the Gospel has taken their place, the hope of Heaven, and the harmony of a pure heart, the triumph of self-mastery, sober thoughts, and a contented mind. How can charity towards all men fail to follow, being the mere affectionateness of innocence and peace? Thus the Spirit of God creates in us the simplicity and warmth of heart which children have, nay, rather the perfections of His heavenly hosts, high and low joined together in His mysterious work; implicit trust, ardent love, abiding purity belonging both to little children and to the adoring Seraphim!

Thoughts such as these, will affect us rightly, if they make us fear and be watchful, while we rejoice. They cannot surely do otherwise; for the mind of a Christian, as I have been attempting to describe it, is not so much what we have, as what we ought to have. To look indeed, after dwelling on it, upon the multitude of men who have been baptized in Christ's name, is too serious a matter, and we need not force ourselves to do so. We need not do so, further than to pray for them, and to protest and strive against what is evil among them; for as to the higher and more solemn thought, how persons, set apart individually and collectively, as Temples of Truth and Holiness, should become what they seem to be, and what their state is in consequence in God's sight, is a question, which it is a great blessing to be allowed to put from us as not our concern. It is our concern only to look to

* Is. xxvi. 3.

ourselves, and to see that as we have received the gift, we “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption;” remembering that “if any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” This reflection, and the recollection of our many backslidings, will ever keep us, please God, from judging others, or from priding ourselves on our privileges. Let us but consider how we have fallen from the light and grace of our Baptism. Were we now what that Holy Sacrament made us, we might ever “go on our way rejoicing;” but having sullied our heavenly garments in one way or other, in a greater or less degree, (God knoweth! and our own consciences too in a measure,) alas! the Spirit of adoption has in part receded from us, and the sense of guilt, remorse, sorrow, and penitence must take His place. We must renew our confession, and seek afresh our absolution day by day, before we dare call upon God as “our Father,” or offer up Psalms and Intercessions to Him. And whatever pain and affliction meets us through life, we must take it as a merciful penance imposed by a Father upon erring children, to be borne meekly and thankfully, and as intended to remind us of the weight of that infinitely greater punishment, which was our desert by nature, and which Christ bore for us on the Cross.

SERMON XX.

MONDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

THE KINGDOM OF THE SAINTS.

DANIEL ii. 35.

The stone that smote the Image became a great Mountain, and filled the whole earth.

DOUBTLESS, could we see the course of God's Dispensations in this world, as the Angels see them, we should not be able to deny that it was His unseen hand that ordered them. Even the most presumptuous sin-

ner would find it hopeless to withstand the marks of Divine Agency in them : and would "believe and tremble." This is what moves the Saints in the Apocalypse, to praise and adore Almighty God,—the view of His wonderful works seen as a whole from first to last. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints ! Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name ?"* And perchance such a contemplation of the Providences of God, whether in their own personal history, or in the affairs of their own country, or of the Church, or of the world at large, may be one of the blessed occupations of God's elect in the Intermediate State. However, even to us sinners, who have neither secured our crown like the Saints departed, much less are to be compared to the Angels who "excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word,"† even to us is vouchsafed some insight into God's Providence, by means of the records of it. History and Prophecy are given us as informants, and reflect various lights upon His Attributes and Will, whether separately or in combination. The text suggests to us an especial instance of this privilege, in the view allowed us of the introduction and propagation of the Gospel ; and it will be fitting at this season of the year, when we especially commemorate its first public manifestation in the Holy Ghost's descent upon the Apostles, to make some remarks upon the wonderful Providence of God as seen in it.

The words of Daniel in the text form part of the disclosure he was inspired to make to Nebuchadnezzar, of the dream that "troubled" him. After describing the great Image, with a head of fine gold, arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay, by which were signified the four Empires which preceded the coming of Christ, he goes on to foretell the rise of Christianity in these words : "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the Image upon his feet, which were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff," heavy and costly as the metals were, they became as light as chaff "of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away. . . . And the stone that smote the Image became a great Mountain, and filled the whole earth."

Afterwards, he adds this interpretation ; "In the days of these kings, shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed ; and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall

* Rev. xv. 3, 4.

† Ps. ciii. 2.

break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

This prophecy of Daniel is fulfilled among us, at this day. We know it is so. Those four idol kingdoms are gone, and the Kingdom of Christ, made without human hands, remains, and is our own blessed portion. But to speak thus summarily, is scarcely to pay due honour to God's work, or to reap the full benefit of our knowledge of it. Let us then look into the details of this great Providence, the history of the Gospel Dispensation.

1. Observe what it was that took place. There have been many kingdoms before and since Christ came, which have been set up and extended by the sword. This, indeed, is the only way in which earthly power grows. Wisdom and skill direct its movements, but the arm of force is the instrument of its aggrandisement. And an unscrupulous conscience, a hard heart, and guilty deeds, are the usual attendants upon its growth: which is, in one form or other, but usurpation, invasion, conquest, and tyranny. It rises against its neighbours, and increases by external collisions and a visible extension. But the propagation of the Gospel was the internal development of one and the same principle in various countries at once, and therefore may be suitably called, invisible, and not of this world. The Jewish Nation did not "push westward, and northward, and southward;" but a spirit went out from its Church into all lands, and wherever it came, there a new Order of things forthwith arose in the bosom of strangers; arose simultaneously, independently in each place, and recognising its fellows in other places only when they were already brought into existence. We know indeed that the Apostles were the instruments, the secret emissaries (as they might be called) of this work; but, I am speaking of the appearance of things as a heathen might regard them. Who among the wise men or the disputers of this world, will take account of a few helpless men wandering about from place to place, and preaching a new doctrine? It never can be believed, it is impossible that they should be the real agents of the revolution which followed. So we maintain, and the world's philosophy must be consistent enough to agree with us. It looked down upon the Apostles in their day; it said they could affect nothing; let it say the same thing now in common fairness. Surely to the philosophy of this world it must appear as absurd to ascribe great changes to such weak vessels, as to attribute them to some imaginary unseen agents, to the heavenly hosts whose existence it disbelieves. As it would account the hypothesis of Angelic interference gratuitous, so did it then, and must still pronounce that of the Apostles' efforts insufficient. Its own witness in the beginning becomes our evidence now.

Dismissing then the thought of the feeble and despised preachers, who went to and fro, let us see what really happened. In the midst of a great Empire, such as the world had never seen, powerful and crafty beyond all former empires, more extensive, and better organized, suddenly a new Kingdom arose. Suddenly in every part of this well-cemented Empire, in the East and West, North and South, as if by some general understanding, yet, without any sufficient system of correspondence or centre of influence, ten thousand orderly societies, professing the same principles, and disciplined upon the same polity, sprang up as from the earth. It seemed as though the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and some new forms of creation were thrown forward from below, the manifold ridges of some "great Mountain," crossing, splitting, disarranging the existing system of things, levelling the hills, filling up the valleys,—irresistible as being sudden, unforeseen, and unprovided for,—till it "filled the whole earth."* This was indeed a "new thing;" and independent of all reference to prophecy, is unprecedented in the history of the world before or since, and calculated to excite the deepest interest and amazement in any really philosophical mind. Throughout the kingdoms and provinces of Rome, while all things looked as usual, the sun rising and setting, the seasons continuing, men's passions swaying them as from the beginning, their thoughts set on their worldly business, or their gain, or their pleasures, on their ambitious prospects and quarrels, warrior measuring his strength with warrior, politicians plotting, and kings banqueting, suddenly this portent came as a snare upon the whole earth. Suddenly, men found themselves encompassed with foes, as a camp surprised by night. And the nature of this hostile host was still more strange, (if possible) than the coming of it. It was not a foreigner who invaded them, nor barbarian from the north, nor a rising of slaves, nor an armament of pirates, but the enemy rose up from among themselves. The first-born in every house "from the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne, to the first-born of the captive in the dungeon," unaccountably found himself enlisted in the ranks of this new power, and estranged from his natural friends. Their brother, the son of their mother, the wife of their bosom, the friend that was as their own soul, these were the sworn soldiers of the "mighty army," that "covered the face of the whole earth." Next when they began to interrogate this enemy of Roman greatness, they found no vague profession among them, no varying account of themselves, no irregular and uncertain plan of action or conduct. They were all members of strictly and similarly organized societies. Every

* Isa. xli. 15, 16.

one in his own district was the subject of a new state, of which there was one visible head, and officers under him.

These small kingdoms were indefinitely multiplied, each of them the fellow of the other. Wherever the Roman Emperor travelled, there he found these seeming rivals of his power, the Bishops of the Church. Further, they one and all refused to obey his orders, and the prescriptive laws of Rome, so far as religion was concerned. The authority of the Pagan Religion, which in the minds of Romans was identified with the history of their greatness, was plainly set at nought by these upstart monarchies. At the same time they professed and observed a singular patience and subjection to the civil powers. They did not stir hand or foot in self-defence ; they submitted to die, nay, accounted death the greatest privilege that could be inflicted on them. And further, they avowed one and all the same doctrine clearly and boldly ; and they professed to receive it from one and the same source. They traced it up through the continuous line of their Bishops to certain twelve or fourteen Jews, who professed to have received it from Heaven. Moreover, they were bound one to another by the closest ties of fellowship ; the society of each place to its ruler, and their rulers one with another by an intimate alliance all over the earth. And lastly, in spite of persecution from without, and occasional dissensions from within, they so prospered, that within three centuries from their first appearance in the Empire they forced its sovereigns to become members of their confederation ; nay, nor ended there, but, as the civil power declined in strength, they became its patrons instead of its victims, mediated between it and its barbarian enemies, and after burying it in peace when its hour came, took its place, won over the invaders, subdued their kings, and at length ruled as supreme ; ruled, united under one head, in the very scenes of their former suffering, in the territory of the Empire, with Rome itself, the seat of the Imperial government, as a centre. I am not entering into the question of doctrine, any more than of prophecy. I am not inquiring how far this victorious Kingdom was by this time perverted from its original character ; but only directing attention to the historical phenomenon. How strange then is the course of the Dispensation ! Five centuries compass the rise and fall of other kingdoms ; but ten were not enough for the full aggrandizement of this. Its sovereignty was but commencing, when other powers have run their course and are exhausted. And now to this day, that original Dynasty, begun by the Apostles, endures. Through all changes of civil affairs, of race, of language, of opinion, the succession of Rulers then begun, has lasted on, and still represents in every country its original founders. " Instead of its fathers, it has had children, who have

been princes in all lands." Truly, this is the vision of a "stone *cut out without hands*," "smiting" the idols of the world, "breaking them in pieces," scattering them "like chaff," and, in their place "filling the whole earth." If there be a Moral Governor over the world, is there not something unearthly in all this, something which we are forced to refer to Him from its marvellousness, something which from its dignity and greatness bespeaks His hand.

2. Now, with this wonderful phenomenon before us, let us consider well the language of Christ and His Apostles. In the very infancy of their Kingdom, while travelling through the cities of Israel, or tossed to and fro as outcasts among the heathen, they speak confidently, solemnly, calmly, of its destined growth and triumph. Observe our Lord's language; "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Again, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel." "The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, *it is the greatest among herbs*, and becometh a tree, *so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof*." Is it possible to doubt that Christ contemplated in these words the overshadowing sovereignty of His kingdom? Let it be observed that the figure used is the same applied by Daniel to the Assyrian Empire. "The tree that thou sawest," he says to Nebuchadnezzar, "which grew and was strong . . . upon whose branches the fowls of the Heaven had their habitation, it is thou, O King." How wondrously was the parallel prophecy fulfilled, when the mighty men of the earth fled for refuge to the Holy Church! Again, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* With what "authority" He speaks! What majestic simplicity, what unhesitating resolve, what commanding superiority is in His words! Reflect upon them in connection with the event.

On the other hand, consider in what language He speaks of that disorganization of society, which was to attend the establishment of His kingdom. "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if

* Mark i. 14, 15. Matt. xvi. 18. Luke xxii. 29, 30. Matt. xiii. 31, 32. Dan. iv. 20, 22. Mark vi. 15, 16.

it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and now I am straitened till it be accomplished!" "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." "The brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death; and ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. . . . In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken."* In the last words, whatever difficulty there may be in the chronological arrangement, is contained a clear announcement under the recognised prophetic symbols, of the destruction, sooner or later, of existing political institutions. In like manner, observe how St. Paul takes for granted the troubles which were coming on the earth, and the rise of the Christian Church amidst them, and reasons on all this as if already realized. "Now hath He promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."†

The language, of which the above is but a specimen, is the more remarkable, because neither Christ nor His Apostles looked forward to these wonderful changes with exultation, but with a deep feeling of mingled joy and sadness, as foreboding those miserable corruptions in the Church, which all Christians allow to have since taken place, though they may differ in their account of them. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold . . . There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before." "In the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, . . . traitors, heady, high-minded . . . having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. . . . Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."‡

Now, if we had nothing more to bring forward than the two consid-

* Luke xii. 49, 50. Matt. x. 34—36. Mark xiii. 12, 13, 24, 25.

† Heb. xii. 26—28.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 12, 24, 25. 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. 13.

erations which have been here insisted on, the singular history of Christianity, and the clear and confident anticipation of it by its first preachers, we should have enough of evidence, one would think, to subdue the most difficult inquirer to a belief of its divinity. But to-morrow we will see, please God, whether something may not be added to the above view of it.

SERMON XXI.

TUESDAY IN WHITSUN, WEEK.

THE KINGDOM OF THE SAINTS.

DANIEL ii. 35.

The stone that smote the Image, became a great Mountain, and filled the whole earth.

YESTERDAY I drew your notice to the outlines of the history of the Church, and the clear and precise anticipation of it, by our Lord and His Apostles. The Gospel Dispensation is confessedly a *singular* phenomenon in human affairs; singular, whether we consider the extent it occupies in history, the harmony of its system, the consistency of its design, its contrariety to the existing course of things, and success in spite of that contrariety, and lastly, the avowed intention of its first preachers to effect those objects, which it really has attained. They professed to be founding a Kingdom; a new Kingdom, different from any that had been before, as disclaiming the use of force,—in this world, yet not of this world,—while it was to be, notwithstanding, of an aggressive and encroaching character, an empire of conquest and aggrandizement, destroying all former powers, and itself standing for ever. Infidels often object to us, that our interpretation of the Scripture prophecies concerning Christ's Kingdom, is after all but allegorical, and therefore evasive. Not so; we are on the whole willing to take our stand on their literal fulfilment. Christ preached that "the kingdom of God was at hand." He founded it, and made Peter and

the other Apostles His Vice-gerents in it after His departure, and He announced its indefinite extension, and its unlimited duration. And, in matter of fact, it exists to this day, with its government vested in the very dynasty which His Apostles began, and its territory spread over more than the world then known to the Jews; with varying success indeed in times and places, and varying consistency and unanimity within; yet, after making every allowance for such partial failures, strictly a visible power, with a political influence founded on invisible pretensions. Thus the anticipations of its founders are unparalleled in their novelty, their boldness and their correctness. To continue our review.

3. If the Christian Church has spread its branches high and wide over the earth, its roots are fixed as deep below the surface. The intention of Christ and His Apostles, on which I have dwelt, is itself but the accomplishment of ancient prophecy.

First, let it be observed that there was an existing belief among the heathen, at the time of its rise, that out of the East a new Empire of the world was destined to issue.* This rumour, however originating, was known at Rome, the then seat of dominion, and is recorded by a Roman historian. Next it became matter, (as it would seem,) for heathen poetry. The most celebrated of Roman poets has foretold the coming of a new Kingdom of peace and righteousness under the rule of a divine and divinely favoured King, who was to be born into the world. Could it be maintained that he wrote from his own imagination, not from existing traditions, this would not at all diminish the marvel, as not in any measure tending to account for it. In that case, the poet would but take his place among the Prophets. Further, if we admit St. Matthew's testimony, which we have no excuse for doubting, we must believe, that, just at the time of Christ's birth, certain Eastern Sages came to Jerusalem in search of a child, of whom they expected great things, and whom they desired to worship in His cradle. And lastly, another Eastern Sage, fourteen hundred years before, had declared, heathen though he was, and uninterested in the event, that "a Star should come out of Jacob, and a Sceptre should rise out of Israel, . . . that out of Jacob should come He that should have dominion."† Now, whether this last prophecy be faithfully recorded by Moses or not, so far is clear, and not a little remarkable, that the Jewish traditions concerning the expected Empire, profess to take their rise in

* Vide Horsley's Dissertation on the Prophecies among the Heathen.

† Numb. xxiv. 17.19.

heathen sources.* It is a clear coincidence with the fact already adverted to, of the prevalence of such predictions among the heathen at the time of Christ's coming.

While such was the testimony of enemies and strangers to this destined rise of a prosperous Empire from Judæa, much more full and varied are the predictions of it delivered by the natives of that country themselves. These, as contained in our holy books, have been again and again illustrated by Christian writers, and neither need nor admit of enumeration here. I will but cite one or two passages by way of reminding you of them. "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under Thee . . . Instead of Thy fathers shall be Thy children, whom Thou mayest make princes in all the earth." "The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion; rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies . . . The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath." "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it; . . . Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be My salvation unto the end of the earth." And almost in the same words, the aged Simeon recognises in the infant Jesus, the Lord's promised "salvation, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel."† In these passages the predictions of bloody revolution and of peace, are as strangely combined, as in our Lord's account of His Kingdom, as being

* Gen. xlix. 10, does not speak of conquest or empire, so clearly as to constitute an exception; much less Gen. xii. 2, 3, and xxviii. 14, which could scarcely be so interpreted, except after other and clearer prophecies.

† Ps. ii. 8, 9. xlv. 3—5. 16. cx. 2. 5. Is. ii. 2—4. xlix. 6. Luke ii. 30—32.

at once a refuge and consolation, and a sword. Maintain, if you will, that they have not hitherto been so fully accomplished in its history as is conceivable; yet, in matter of fact, has not this twofold character of the Dispensation been in such measure realized, as substantially answers to the words of the prediction? Consider only the wars and tumults of the middle ages, of which the Church was the occasion, and at the same time, its salutary influence upon the fierce and lawless soldiers who then filled the thrones of Europe. Take the Prophecy, take the History; and say fairly, whether, in accordance with the Scripture prospect, we do not actually find in the centuries I speak of, a political power, making vassals of the kings of the earth, humbling them beneath its feet, affording matter of endless strife, yet acting as the very bond of peace, as far as peace was really attained. How truly have "the sons of them that afflicted" the Church, "come bending unto her; and they that despised her, bowed themselves at the soles of her feet,"* and "the enemies of Christ been made His footstool!"

It may help us in entering into the state of the case, to consider what our surprise would be, did we in the course of our researches into history, find any resemblance to this prophetic forecast in the annals of other kingdoms. Even one poor coincidence in the history of Rome, viz. of the anticipated and the actual duration of its greatness, does not fail to arrest our attention. We know that even before the Christian era, it was the opinion of the Roman Augurs, that the twelve vultures which Romulus had seen previous to the foundation of the city, represented the twelve centuries, assigned as the limit of its power; an anticipation which was singularly fulfilled by the event.† Yet what is this solitary fact to the series of varied and circumstantial prophecies which ushered in, and were fulfilled in Christianity? Extend the twelve centuries of Roman dominion to an additional half of that period, preserve its monarchical form inviolate, whether from aristocratic or popular innovation from first to last, and trace back the predictions concerning it, through an antecedent period, nearly of the same duration, and then you will have assimilated its history—not altogether, but in one or two of its features, to the characteristics of the Gospel Dispensation. As it is, this Roman wonder only serves to assist the imagination in embracing the marvellousness of those systematic prophecies concerning Christ's

* Is. lx. 14.

† Vide Gibbon, ch. xxxv. fin. The ancient prediction concerning the fortunes of Russia is a more remarkable instance. A brazen equestrian statue, which had been originally in Antioch, is said by historians of the beginning of the 12th century to be "inscribed with a prophecy, how the Russians in the last days should become masters of Constantinople." Vide Gibbon, ch. lv.

kingdom, which, from their number, variety, succession, and contemporary influence, may almost be accounted in themselves, and without reference to their fulfilment, a complete and independent dispensation.

4. Lastly, the course of Providence co-operated with this scheme of prophecy; God's word and hand went together. The state of the Jews for the last four hundred years before Christ was a preparation deliberately carried on for that which was to follow; just as the wanderings of Abraham and his heirs, the descent into Egypt, and the captivity there, for the same period, constituted a process introductory to the establishment of the Jewish Church. Consider the nature of this preparation: the overthrow of the nation by the Chaldeans, issued in the dispersion of its members all over the civilized world, so that in all the principal cities Jewish communities existed, which gradually attracted to their faith Gentile converts, and were in one way or other the nucleus of the Christian Church, when the Gospel was at length published. Now, here, I would first direct your attention to this strange connexion, which is visible at first sight between the dispersion of the Jews and the propagation of Christianity. Does not such a manifest appearance of cause and effect look very much like an indication of design? Next, I remark that this dispersion was later than the predictions concerning the Christian Church contained in the Jewish Scriptures; which in consequence cannot be charged with borrowing the idea of it from any actual disposition of things. And further, let it be observed, that the disposition arose from the apparent frustration of all their hopes; a signal instance, as it would seem, of an overruling Providence, which would not be defeated as regards its object, in spite of the failure of those instruments, in which alone a human eye could see the means of accomplishing it.

Before concluding, I must explain myself on one point which has been incidentally mentioned more than once in the foregoing remarks, viz. as to the connection between the temporal fortunes of the Church, in the middle ages, and the inspired predictions concerning it. It may seem, before due attention has been given to the subject, as if none but members of the Roman Communion could regard them as parts of the Divine Dispensation; I therefore observe as follows:—

There is a considerable analogy between the history of (what is called) the Papacy and that of the Israelitish monarchy. That monarchy was perversely demanded, and presumptuously realized by the nation, when God had not led the way; it terminated in the dissolution of the federal union of the Tribes, the corruption of the people, and the ruin of their temporal power. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied, that

in one sense that kingdom was the scope of the Mosaic Institutions,* and a fulfilment of prophecy. Its kings were many of them highly favoured in themselves, and types of the promised Saviour; and their government and subjects were singularly blessed. Consider the circumstances attendant upon the building of the Temple. This may be accounted as the most glorious event in their history, the fruit of Moses' anxieties and David's labours, the completion and resting-place of the whole Dispensation, and the pledge of the more spiritual blessedness which was to come. Connect it with Solomon's reign, its peace and prosperity,—on the other hand with its voluptuousness, its departure from the simplicity of the Mosaic Law,—with Solomon's personal character, degenerating from faith and purity into sins which we are not given to fathom. Are we able rightly to adjust the relation between the blessings destined for Israel, and the actual prosperity and greatness of this kingdom set up in rebellion against God, so as to be able to say how far it was recognised in His counsels, how far not? Can we draw the line between God's work and man's work?

I am not maintaining that the case of the Papacy is parallel to that of the Jewish Monarchy; nay, I do not introduce the latter for the sake of the analogy at all, be it stronger or fainter; but merely in order to show that it is possible for certain events to be in some sort a fulfilment of prophecy, without considering every part of them, the manner of their accomplishment, the circumstances, the instruments, and the like, to be approved by God. The Latin ecclesiastical system of the middle ages may be, for what we know, the shadow, of that gracious design, which would have been accomplished, had Christians possessed faith enough to keep closely to God's revealed will. For what we know, it was intended that all the kingdoms of the earth should have been made subject to the spiritual rule of the Church. The presumption of man defeated this purpose; but it could not so far defeat it, but some sort of fulfilment took place. The mustard-plant, stopped in its natural growth, shot out irregular branches. Satan could not hinder, he could but corrupt the kingdom promised to the Saints. He could but seduce them to trust in an arm of flesh. He could but sow the seeds of decay among them by alluring them to bow down to "Astoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites;" to take a king over them like the nations, "when the Lord was their king." Had it not been for this falling away in divers times and places, surely Christendom would not be in its present miserable state of disunion and weakness; nor the prophecies respecting it

* Deut. xvii. 14—20.

have issued in any degree in defeat and disappointment. Still, dim and partial as is their fulfilment, there is more than enough, even in what is and has been, to attest in the Church the presence of that Almighty Hand, whose very failures (so to say) and losses are deeds of victory and triumph.

As for ourselves, what was the exact measure of the offences of our forefathers in the faith, when they, tired of the Christian Theocracy, and clothed the church with "the purple robe" of Cæsar, it avails not to determine. Not denying their sin, still, after contemplating the glories of the Temple which they built, we may well bewail our present fallen state, the Priests and Levites, and chief of the Fathers, all of us "weeping with a loud voice," though the many shout for joy,— "praising" indeed, and giving thanks unto the Lord, because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel,"* not undervaluing the blessings we have, yet humbling ourselves as the sinful offspring of sinful parents, who from the first have resisted and frustrated the grace of God, and seeing in the present feebleness and blindness of the Church, the tokens of His righteous judgments upon us; yet withal, from His continued mercies towards us, drawing the comfortable hope, that for His Son's sake He will not forsake us in time to come, and cherishing a sure trust, that, if we "give Him no rest" by our services of prayer and good works, he will at length, even yet, though doubtless in a way which we cannot understand, "establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

* Ezra iii. 11, 12.

SERMON XXII.

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

THE GOSPEL, A TRUST COMMITTED TO US.

1 TIM. vi. 20, 21.

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to Thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called ; which some professing, have erred concerning the faith.

THESE words are addressed in the first place to the Ministers of the Gospel in the person of Timothy ; yet they contain a serious command and warning for all Christians. For all of us, high and low, in our measure are responsible for the safe-keeping of the Faith. We have all an equal interest in it, no one less than another, though an Order of men has been especially set apart for the duty of guarding it. If we Ministers of Christ guard it not, it is *our* sin, but it is *your* loss, my brethren ; and as any private person would feel that his duty and his safety lay in giving alarm of a fire or of a robbery in the city where he dwelt, though there were ever so many special officers appointed for the purpose, so, doubtless every one of us is bound in his place to contend for the Faith, and to have an eye to its safe custody. If indeed the Faith of Christ were vague, indeterminate, a matter of opinion or deduction, then, indeed, we may well conceive that the Ministers of the Gospel would be the only due expounders and guardians of it ; then it might be fitting for private Christians to wait till they were informed concerning the best mode of expressing it, or the relative importance of this or that part of it. But this has been all settled long ago ; the Gospel Faith is a definite deposit,—a treasure, common to all, one and the same in every age, conceived in set words, and such as admits of being received, preserved, transmitted. We may safely leave the custody of it even in the hands of individuals ; for in so doing, we are leaving nothing at all to private rashness and fancy, to pride, debate and

strife. We are but allowing men to "contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints;" the Faith which was put into their hands one by one at their baptism, in a form of words called the Creed, and which has come down to them in that very same form from the first ages. This Faith is what even the humblest member of the Church may and must contend for; and in proportion to his education, will the circle of his knowledge enlarge. The Creed delivered to him in Baptism will then unfold, first, into the Nicene Creed (as it is called,) then into the Athanasian; and, according as his power of grasping the sense of its articles increases, so will it become his duty to contend for them in their fuller and more accurate form. All these unfoldings of the Gospel Doctrine will become to him precious as the original articles, because they are in fact nothing more or less than the one true explanation of them, delivered down to us from the first ages, together with the original Baptismal or Apostles' Creed itself. As all nations confess to the existence of a God, so all branches of the Church confess to the Gospel doctrine; as the tradition of men witnesses to a Moral Governor and Judge, so the tradition of Saints witnesses to the Father Almighty, and His only Son, and the Holy Ghost. And as neither the superstitions of polytheism, nor the atheistic extravagances of particular countries at particular times, practically interfere with our reception of the one message which the sons of Adam deliver; so, much less, do the local heresies and temporary errors of the early Church, and its superadded corruptions, its schismatic offshoots, or its partial defections in later ages, impair the evidence and the claim of its teaching, in the judgment of those who sincerely wish to know the Truth once delivered to it. Blessed be God! we have not to find the Truth, it is put into our hands; we have but to commit it to our hearts, to preserve it inviolate, and to deliver it over to our posterity.

This then is the meaning of St. Paul's injunction in the text, given at the time when the Truth was first published. "Keep that which is committed to thy trust," or rather, "keep the Deposit;" turn away from those "profane emptinesses" which pretenders to philosophy and science bring forward against it. Do not be moved by them; do not alter your Creed for them; for the end of such men is error. They go on disputing and refining, giving new meanings, modifying received ones, still with the idea of the True Faith in their minds as the scope of their inquiries; but at length they "miss" it. They shoot on one side of it, and embrace a deceit of their own instead of it.

By the Faith is evidently meant, as St. Paul's words show, some definite doctrine; not a mere temper of mind or principle of action, much less, vaguely, the Christian cause; and accordingly, in his Second

Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle mentions as his comfort in the view of death, that he had "kept the Faith." In the same Epistle he describes it more particularly as "the Form" or outline "of sound words," "the excellent Deposit;" phrases, which show that the Deposit certainly was a series of truths and rules of some sort, (whether only doctrinal, or preceptive also, and ecclesiastical,) and which are accurately descriptive of the formulary since called the Apostles' Creed.* And these same sacred truths which Timothy had received in trust, he was bid "commit" in turn "to faithful men," who should be "able to teach others also." By God's grace, he was enabled so to commit them; and they being thus transmitted from generation to generation, have through God's continued mercy, reached even unto us, "upon whom the ends of the world are come."

I propose, in what follows, to set before you, the account given us in Scripture of this Apostolic Faith; being led to do so on the one hand by the Day, on which we commemorate its fundamental doctrine, and on the other, by the mistaken views entertained of it by many persons in this day, which seem to require notice.

Perhaps it may be right first to state what these erroneous opinions are; which I will do briefly. They are not novel, as scarcely any religious error can be, and assuredly what has once or twice died away in former times, will come to its end in like manner once more. I do not speak, as if I feared it could overcome the Ancient Truth once delivered to the Saints; but still, our watchfulness and care are the means appointed for its overthrow, and are not superseded but rather encouraged, and roused, by the anticipation of ultimate success.

It is a fashion of the day, then, to suppose that all insisting upon precise Articles of Faith, is injurious to the cause of spiritual religion, and inconsistent with an enlightened view of it; that it is all one to maintain, that the Gospel requires the reception of definite and positive Articles, and to acknowledge it to be technical and formal; that such a notion is superstitious, and interferes with the "liberty wherewith Christ has made us free;" that it argues a deficient insight into the principles and ends, a narrow comprehension of the spirit of His revelation. Accordingly, instead of accepting reverently the doctrinal Truths which have come down to us, an attempt is made by the reasoners of this age to compare them together, to weigh and measure

* Vide also, among other passages, 1 John ii. 21—27, which refers to nothing short of a definite doctrine; e. g. "Let that therefore abide in you, *which ye have heard from the beginning*." Again, 2 Tim. ii. 18, "Who *concerning the Truth* have erred, saying that the Resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some."

them, to analyze, simplify, refashion them; to reduce them to system, to arrange them into primary and secondary, to harmonize them into an intelligible dependence upon each other. The teacher of Christianity, instead of delivering its Mysteries, and, (as far as may be) unfolding them, is taught to scrutinize them, with a view of separating the inward holy sense from the form of words, in which the Spirit has indissolubly lodged them. He asks himself, what is the *use* of the message which has come down to him; what the comparative value of this or that part of it. He proceeds to assume that there is some one end of his ministerial labours, such as to be ascertainable by him, some one revealed object of God's dealings with man in the Gospel. Then, perhaps, he arbitrarily assigns this to be the salvation of the world, or the conversion of sinners. Next he measures all the Scripture doctrines by their respective sensible tendency to effect this end. He goes on to discard or degrade this or that sacred truth as superfluous in consequence, or of inferior importance; and throws the stress of his teaching upon one or other, which he pronounces to contain in it the essence of the Gospel, and on which he rests all others which he retains. Lastly, he re-constructs the language of theology to suit his (so-called) improved views of Scripture doctrine.

For instance, you will meet with writers who consider that all the Attributes and Providences of God are virtually expressed in the one proposition "God is Love;" the other notices of His unapproachable Glory contained in Scripture being but modifications of this. In consequence they are led on to deny, first, the doctrine of eternal punishment, as being inconsistent with this notion of Infinite Love; next, resolving such expressions as the "wrath of God" into a figure of speech, they deny the Atonement, viewed as a real reconciliation of an offended God to His creatures. Or, again, they say, that the object of the Gospel Revelation is merely practical, and therefore, that theological doctrines are altogether unnecessary, mere speculations, and hindrances to the extension of religion; or, if not purely injurious, at least requiring modification. Hence, you may hear them ask, "what is the *harm* of being a Sabellian, or Arian? how does it affect the moral character?" Or, again, they say that the great end of the Gospel, is the union of hearts in the love of Christ and each other, and that in consequence, Creeds are but fetters on souls which have received the Spirit of Adoption; that Faith is a mere temper and a principle, not the acceptance for Christ's sake of a certain collection of Articles. Others, again, have rested the whole Gospel upon the doctrines of the Atonement, and Sanctification. And others have seemed to make the doctrine of Justification by Faith the one cardinal point, upon which

the gates of life open and shut. Let so much suffice in explanation of the drift of the following remarks.

St. Paul, I repeat, bids us hold fast the Faith which is entrusted to our custody; and that Faith is a "Form of sound words," an "Outline," which it is our duty, according to our opportunities, to fill up and complete in all its parts. Now, let us see how much the very text of Scripture will yield us of these elementary lines of Truth, of the unchangeable Apostolic Rule of Faith, of which we are bound to be so jealous.

Its essential doctrine of course is what St. John terms generally "the doctrine of Christ," and which, in the case of every one calling himself Christian, is the profession necessary, (as he tells us,) for our receiving him into our houses. St. Paul speaks in much the same compendious way concerning the Gospel Faith, when he says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus, the Christ." However, in an earlier passage of the same Epistle, he speaks more explicitly: "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Thus the crucifixion of Christ was one essential part of the outline of sound words preached and delivered by the Apostle. In his Epistle to the Romans, he adds another article of faith: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here then the doctrine of the Resurrection is added to that of the Crucifixion. Elsewhere he says: "There is One God, and One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time; even whereunto I am ordained a preacher." Here Christ's Mediation and Atonement are added as doctrines of Apostolical preaching. Further, towards the end of an Epistle already quoted, he speaks still more distinctly of the Gospel which he had preached, and had delivered over to his converts; and which he adds, all the other Apostles preached also. "I put into your hands, first of all, what had before been put into mine, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."* Here we find an approximation to the Articles of the Creed, as the Church has ever worded them.

But the letter of Scripture gives us still further insight into the subjects of the Sacred Deposit, of which St. Paul speaks in the text. In the course of the very Epistle in which it occurs, he delivers to Timothy a more explicit "form of sound words" than any I have cited from

* 2 John 9—11. 1 Cor. iii. 11; ii. 2. Rom. x. 9. 1 Tim. ii. 5—7. 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

his writings. He writes to tell him "how to conduct himself in the Church of the Living God," which he had to govern, and how to preserve it as "the pillar and ground of the Truth;" and proceeds to remind him what that Truth is. "God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Here is mention, among other doctrines, of the Incarnation and the Ascension. It seems then to have been an article of the original Apostles' Creed, that Christ was not a mere man, but God incarnate. In like manner, when the Ethiopian asked to be baptized, and Philip said he might if he "believed with all his heart," this was his confession; "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This, it should be observed, is his confession, *after* Philip had "*preached unto him Jesus.*"*

Now, let us pass on to the very words in which that Baptism itself was administered; words, which the Eunuch might not understand indeed at the time, but which were then committed to him to feed upon in his heart by faith, and by the influence of the grace at the same time given, gradually to enter into. Those words were first ordained by Christ Himself, as some mysterious key by which the fountains of grace might be opened upon the baptismal water,—"*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;*" and they show that not only the doctrine of Christ, but that of the Trinity also, formed an essential portion of the Sacred Treasure, of which the Church was ordained to be the Preacher. Lastly, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are presented with an enumeration of some other of the fundamental Articles of Faith, which the Apostles delivered. St. Paul therein speaks of "*the foundation of Repentance from dead works, and of Faith towards God, of the doctrine of Baptisms, and of Laying on of hands, and of Resurrection of the dead, and of Eternal Judgment.*"*

Observe then, how many Articles of that Faith, which the Church has ever confessed, are incidentally brought before us as such, and delivered as such in very form, in the course of Scripture narrative and precept;—the doctrine of the Trinity; of the Incarnation of the Son of God, His Mediatorship, His Atonement for our sins on the Cross, His Death, Burial, Resurrection on the third day, and Ascension; of Pardon on Repentance, Baptism as the Instrument of it, Imposition of hands, the General Resurrection, and the Judgment once for all. I might also appeal to such passages as that in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where St. Paul says, "*To us there is One God the Father,*

* 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Acts viii. 35—37.

† Matt. xxviii. 19. Heb. vi. 1, 2. Vide also 2 Tim. ii. 16—18, above referred to.

. . . and One Lord Jesus Christ.”* but I wished to confine myself to texts in which the doctrines specified are expressly introduced as portions of a Formulary or Confession, committed or accepted, whether on the part of Ministers of the Church at Ordination, or of each member of it when he was baptized.

It may be proper to add, that the history of the Primitive Church altogether concurs in this view of the nature of Gospel Faith, which Scripture sets before us. I mean we have sufficient evidence that in matter of fact, such Creeds as St. Paul's did exist in its various branches, not differing from each other, except, (for instance,) as the Lord's Prayer in St. Matthew's Gospel differs from St. Luke's version of it; that this one and the same Faith, was committed to every Christian every where on his baptism: and that it was considered as the especial trust of the Church of each place and of its Bishop, as having been received by continual transmission from its original Founder, whether Apostle or Evangelist.

Enough has been already said by way of proving from Scripture, how precise, positive, manifold, are the Articles of our Faith, and how St. Paul insists on this their definiteness and minuteness; enough to show that we may not slur them over, nor heap them together confusedly, nor tamper with them, with the profaneness either of carelessness or of curious disputing,—in a word that they are *sacred*. But this sacred character of our trust may be shown by several distinct considerations, which shall now be set before you.

1. First from the very circumstance that it is a *trust*. The plain and simple reason for our preaching and preserving the Faith, is because we have been told to do so. It is an act of mere obedience to Him who has “put us in trust with the Gospel.” Our one great concern as regards it, is to deliver it over safe. This is the end in view, which all men have before them, who are any how trusted in worldly matters. “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”† Our Lord had said, that “this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world *as a witness* unto all nations.” Accordingly, His Apostle declares, speaking of his persecutions, “None of these things move me, . . . so that I might finish . . . the Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, fully to *witness* the Gospel of the grace of God.” And again, when his departure is at hand, he comforts himself with the reflection, that he has “kept the Faith.”‡ To keep the Faith in the world till the end, may, for what we know, be a sufficient object of our

* 1 Cor. viii. 6.

† 1 Cor. iv. 2.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 14. Acts xx. 24. 2 Tim. iv. 7.

preaching and confessing, though nothing more come of it. Hence then the force of the words addressed to Timothy ; " Hold fast," " keep ;" " This charge I commit unto thee ;" " continue thou in the things entrusted thee ;" " put the brethren in remembrance ;" " commit thou the same to faithful men ;" " refuse profane and old wives' fables ;" " shun profane vain-talking ;" " avoid foolish and unlearned questions." Were there no other reason for the Articles of the Creed being held sacred, their being a trust would be sufficient. Till we feel that we *have* a trust, a treasure to transmit, for the safety of which we are answerable, we have missed one chief peculiarity in our actual position. Yet did men feel this adequately, they would have little heart to indulge in the random speculations which at present are so familiar to their minds.

2. This sense of the seriousness of our charge is increased by considering, that after all we do not know, and cannot form a notion, what is the real final object of the Gospel Revelation. Men are accustomed to say, that it is the salvation of the world, which it certainly is not. If, instead of this, we say that Christ came " to purify unto Himself a peculiar people," then indeed, we speak a great Truth ; but this, though a main end of our preaching, is not its simple and ultimate object. Rather, as far as we are told at all, that object is the glory of God ; but we cannot understand what is meant by this, or how the Dispensation of the Gospel promotes it. It is enough for us that we must act with the simple thought of God before us, make all ends subordinate to this, and leave the event to Him. We know, indeed, to our great comfort, that we cannot preach in vain. His heavenly word " shall not return unto Him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it." Still it is surely our duty to preach, " whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear." We must preach, as our Lord enjoins in a text already quoted, " as a witness." Accordingly He Himself, before the heathen Pilate, " bore witness unto the Truth ;" and St. Paul conjures us to keep our sacred charge as in the presence of Him, who " before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." Doubtless, His glory is set forth in some mysterious way in the rejection, as well as in the reception of the Gospel ; and we must co-operate with Him. We must co-operate so far, as to be content to wound as well as to heal, to condemn as well as to absolve. We must not shrink from being " a savour of death unto death," as well as " of life unto life." We must steadfastly believe, however painful may be the duty, that we are in either case offering up a " sweet savour of Christ unto God, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish." We must learn to acquiesce and concur in the order of God's Provi-

dence, and bear to rejoice over great Babylon and her inhabitants, when the wrath of God has fallen upon her.

This consideration is an answer to those who would limit our message to what is influential and convincing in it, and measure its divinity by its success. But I have introduced it rather to show generally, how utterly we are in the dark about the whole subject; and therefore, as being in the dark, how necessary it is to gird our garments about us, and hold fast our treasure, and hasten forward, lest we betray our trust. We have no means of knowing how far a small mistake in the Faith may carry us astray. If we do not know, why it is to be proclaimed to all, though all will not hear, much less do we know why this or that doctrine is revealed, or what is the importance of it. The grant of grace in Baptism follows upon the accurate enunciation of one or two words; and if so much depends on one sacred observance, even down to the letter in which it is committed to us, why should not at least the substantial sense of other truths, nay, even the primitive wording of them, have some especial claim upon the Church's safe guardianship of them? St. Paul's articles of belief are precise and individual; why should we not take them as we find them? Why should we be wise above that is written? Why should we not be thankful that a work is put upon us which is so plainly within our power, to hold the Gospel Truths, to count and note them, to feed upon them, to hand them on? However wilful and feverish minds have not the wisdom to trust divine teaching. They persist in saying that Articles of belief are mere formalities; and that to preach and transmit them is to miss the conversion of the heart in faith and holiness. They would rather rouse emotions, with the view (as they hope) of changing the character. Forgetful that tempers and states of mind are things seen by God alone, and when really spiritual, the work of His Unseen Spirit, and beyond the power of man to ensure or ascertain, they put upon themselves what man cannot do. They think it a light thing to be sowers of that heavenly seed, which He shall make spring up in the hearer's heart to life eternal. They are willing to throw it aside as something barren and worthless, as the sand of the sea shore; and they desire to plant the flowers of grace, (or what appear such,) in one another's hearts, as though under their assiduous culture they could take root therein. Far different is the example set us in the services of the Church! In the Office for Baptism the Articles of the Creed are recited one by one, that the infant Christian may be put in charge of every jot and tittle to the sacred Covenant, which he inherits. In the Communion Service, in the midst of its solemn praises to the God of all grace, when Angels and Archangels are to be summoned to join in the

Thanksgiving, Articles from the Creed are recited, as if by way of preparation, with an exact doctrinal precision, according to the Festival celebrated,—as for instance on this day. And in the Visitation of the Sick, he whom God seems about to call away, is asked, not whether he has certain spiritual feelings within him, (of which he cannot judge,) but definitely and to his great comfort, whether he believes those Articles of the Christian Faith one by one, which he received at Baptism, was catechized in during his childhood, and confessed whenever he came to worship God in Church. It is in the same spirit that the most precise and systematic of all the Creeds, the Athanasian, is rather, as the form of it shows, a hymn of praise to the Eternal Trinity; it being meet and right at festive seasons to bring forth before our God every jewel of the Mysteries entrusted us, to show that of those which He gave us we have lost none.

3. Lastly, the sacred character of our charge is shown most forcibly by the sanction which attends it. What God has guarded by an Anathema, surely claims some jealous custody on our part. Christ says expressly, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."* It is quite clear, that in our Lord's meaning, this belief included the reception of a positive Creed, because He gave one at the time,—that sovereign Truth, from which all others flow, which we this day celebrate, the Faith of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three Persons, One God. This doctrine then, at least is necessary to be believed by every one in order to salvation: and that certain other doctrines are also necessary, is plain from other parts of Scripture: as, for instance, our Lord's Resurrection, from St. Paul's words to the Romans.† Now, this doctrine of the Resurrection, which closed our Lord's earthly mission, is evidently at a wide interval in the series of doctrines from that of the Trinity in Unity, which is the foundation of the whole Dispensation; so that a thoughtful mind, which fears to go wrong, will see reason to conclude even from hence, that perchance the doctrines which go between the two, the Incarnation, for instance, or the Crucifixion, are also essential parts of saving Faith. And, in fact, various passages of Scripture, as we have already seen, occur, in which these intermediate Articles are separately made the basis of the Gospel. Again, let St. Paul's language to the Galatians be well considered, who had departed from the Faith in what might have seemed but a subordinate detail, the abolition of the Jewish Law. "Though we, or an Angel from heaven," he says, "preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have

* Matt. xvi. 16.

† Rom. x. 9.

preached unto you, let him be Anathema. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be Anathema.”* The state of the case then is this :—we know that some doctrines are necessary to be believed ; we are not told how many ; and we have no powers of mind adequate to the task of solving the problem. We cannot give any sufficient reason, beside the revealed word, why the doctrine of the Trinity itself should be essential ; and if it is essential nevertheless, why should not any other ? How dangerous then is it to trifle with any portion of the message committed to us ! Surely we are bound to guard what *may* be material in it, as carefully as if we knew it to be so ; our not knowing it, so far from being a reason for indifference, becoming an additional motive for anxiety and watchfulness. And, while we do not dare anticipate God’s final judgment by attaching the Anathema to individual unbelievers, yet neither do we dare conceal any part of the doctrines guarded by it, lest haply it should be found to lie against ourselves, who have “shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.”

To conclude.—The error against which these remarks are directed, viz. that of systematizing and simplifying the Gospel Faith, making much of one or two articles of it, and disparaging or dismissing the rest, is not confined to this province of religion only. In the same spirit, sometimes the Ordinances, sometimes the Polity of the Church, are dishonoured and neglected ; the doctrine of Baptism contrasted with that of inward Sanctification, precepts of “decency and order” made light of before the command to evangelize the heathen, the injunction to “stand in the old ways” broken with a view to increase the so-called efficiency of our ecclesiastical institutions. In like manner, by one class of reasoners the Gospels are made every thing, by another the Epistles. In all ages, indeed, consistent obedience is a very rare endowment ; but in this cultivated age, we have undertaken to defend inconsistency on grounds of reason. On the other hand hear the words of Eternal Truth. “Whosoever shall break one of these *least* commandments, *and shall teach men so*, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven ; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”†

* Gal. i. 8, 9.

† Matt. v. 19.

SERMON XXIII.

THE FEAST OF ST. BARNABAS THE APOSTLE.

TOLERANCE OF RELIGIOUS ERROR.

ACTS xi. 24.

He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith.

WHEN Christ came to form a people unto Himself to show forth His praise, He took of every kind. Highways and hedges, the streets and lanes of the city furnished guests for His supper, as well as the wilderness of Judæa, or the courts of the Temple. His first followers are a sort of type of the general Church, in which many and various minds are as one. And this is one use, if we duly improve it, of our Festivals ; which set before us specimens of the Divine Life under the same diversity of outward circumstances, advantages, and dispositions, which we discern around us. The especial grace poured upon the Apostles and their associates, whether miraculous or moral, had no tendency to destroy their respective peculiarities of temper and character, to invest them with a sanctity beyond our imitation, or to preclude failings and errors which may be our warning. It left them, as it found them, men. Peter and John, for instance, the simple fishers on the lake of Genesareth, Simon the Zealot, Matthew the busy tax-gatherer, and the ascetic Baptist, how different are these,—first, from each other,—then, from Apollos the eloquent Alexandrian, Paul the learned Pharisee, Luke the physician, or the eastern sages, whom we celebrate at the Feast of the Epiphany ; and these again how different from the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the Innocents, or Simeon and Anna, who are brought before us at the Feast of the Purification, or the women who ministered to our Lord, Mary the wife of Cleophas, the Mother of James and John, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus ; or again, from the widow with her two mites, the woman whose issue of blood was staunched, and she who poured forth tears of penitence upon His feet, and the ignorant Samaritan at the well ! Moreover, the definiteness and

evident truth of many of the characters presented to us in the Gospels serve to realize to us the history, and to help our faith, while at the same time they afford us abundant instruction. Such, for instance, is the immature ardour of James and John, the sudden fall of Peter, the obstinacy of Thomas, and the cowardice of Mark. St. Barnabas furnishes us with a lesson in his own way ; nor shall I be wanting in piety towards that Holy Apostle, if on this his day I hold him forth, not only in the peculiar graces of his character, but in those parts of it in which he becomes our warning, not our example.

The text says, that "he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." This praise of goodness is explained by his very name, Barnabas, "the Son of Consolation," which was given him, as it appears, to mark his character of kindness, gentleness, considerateness, warmth of heart, compassion, and munificence.

His acts answer to this account of him. The first we hear of him is his selling some land which was his, and giving the proceeds to the Apostles, to distribute to his poorer brethren. The next notice of him sets before us a second deed of kindness, of as amiable, though of a mere private character. "When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples ; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles, and declared how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus, in the name of Jesus."* Next, he is mentioned in the text, and still with commendation of the same kind. How had he shown that "he was a good man?" by going on a mission of love to the first converts at Antioch. Barnabas, above the rest, was honoured by the Church with this work, which had in view the encouraging and binding together in unity and strength this incipient fruit of God's grace, "When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad;" (surely this circumstance itself is mentioned by way of showing his character :) and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Thus he may even be accounted the founder of the Church of Antioch, being aided by St. Paul, whom he succeeded in bringing thither. Next, on occasion of an approaching famine he joined with St. Paul in being the minister of the Gentiles' bounty towards the poor saints of Judæa. Afterwards, when the Judaizing Christians troubled the Gentile converts with the Mosaic ordinances, Barnabas was sent with the same Apostle and others from the Church of Jerusalem to relieve their perplexity. Thus the Scripture history of

* Acts ix. 26, 27.

him does but answer to his name, and is scarcely more than a continued exemplification of his characteristic grace. Moreover, let the particular force of his name be observed. The Holy Ghost is called our Paraclete, as assisting, advocating, encouraging, comforting us ; now, as if to put the highest honour upon the Apostle, the same term is applied to him. He is called "the Son of Consolation," or the Paraclete ; and in accordance with this honourable title, we are told that when the Gentile converts of Antioch had received from his and St. Paul's hands the Apostles' decision against the Judaizers, "they rejoiced for the *consolation*."

On the other hand, on two occasions his conduct is scarcely becoming an Apostle, as instancing somewhat of that infirmity which uninspired persons of his peculiar character frequently exhibit. Both are cases of indulgence towards the faults of others, yet in a different way ; the one, an over-easiness in a matter of doctrine, the other, in a matter of conduct. With all his tenderness for the Gentiles, yet on one occasion he could not resist indulging the prejudices of some Judaizing brethren, who came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Peter first was carried away ; before they came, "he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him ; insomuch, that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." The other instance was his indulgent treatment of Mark, his sister's son, which occasioned the quarrel between him and St. Paul. "Barnabas determined to take with them," on their Apostolic journey, "John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."*

Now it is very plain what description of character, and what kind of lesson, is brought before us in the history of this Holy Apostle. Holy he was, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ; still the characteristics and the infirmities of man remained in him, and thus he is "unto us for an ensample," consistently with the reverence we feel towards him as one of the foundations of the Christian Church. He is an ensample and warning to us, not only as showing us what we ought to be, but as evidencing how the highest gifts and graces are corrupted in our sinful nature, if we are not diligent to walk step by step, according to the light of God's commandments. Be our mind as heavily as it may be, most loving, most holy, most zealous, most energetic, most peaceful, yet if we look off from Him for a moment, and look towards ourselves, at

* Gal. ii. 12, 13. Acts xv. 37, 38.

once these excellent tempers fall into some extreme or mistake. Charity becomes over-easiness, holiness is tainted with spiritual pride, zeal degenerates into fierceness, activity eats up the spirit of prayer, hope is heightened into presumption. We cannot guide ourselves. God's revealed word is our sovereign rule of conduct; and therefore, among other reasons, is faith so principal a grace, for it is the directing power which receives the commands of Christ, and applies them to the heart.

And there is particular reason for dwelling upon the character of St. Barnabas in this age, because he may be considered as the type of the better sort of men among us, and those who are most in esteem. The world itself indeed is what it ever has been, ungodly; but in every age it chooses some one or other peculiarity of the Gospel as the badge of its particular fashion for the time being, and sets up as objects of admiration those who eminently possess it. Without asking, therefore, how far men act from Christian principle, or only from the imitation of it, or from some mere secular or selfish motive, yet, certainly, this age, as far as appearance goes, may be accounted in its character not unlike Barnabas, as being considerate, delicate, courteous, and generous-minded in all that concerns the intercourse of man with man. There is a great deal of thoughtful kindness among us, of conceding in little matters, of scrupulous propriety of words, and a sort of code of liberal and honourable dealing in the conduct of society. There is a steady regard for the rights of individuals, nay, as one would fain hope in spite of misgivings, for the interest of the poorer classes, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. In such a country as ours, there must always be numberless instances of distress after all; yet the anxiety to relieve it existing among the more wealthy classes is unquestionable. And it is as unquestionable, that we are somewhat disposed to regard ourselves favourably in consequence; and in the midst of our national trials and fears, to say (nay sometimes with real humility and piety) that we do trust that these characteristic virtues of the age may be allowed to come up as a memorial before God, and to plead for us. When we think of the commandments, we know Charity to be the first and greatest; and we are tempted to ask with the young ruler, "What lack we yet?"

I ask then, by way of reply, does not our kindness too often degenerate into weakness, and thus become not Christian Charity, but lack of Charity, as regards the objects of it? Are we sufficiently careful to do what is right and just, rather than what is pleasant? do we clearly understand our professed principles, and do we keep to them under temptation?

The history of St. Barnabas will help us to answer this question honestly. Now I fear we lack altogether, what he lacked in certain occur-

rences in it, firmness, manliness, godly severity. I fear it must be confessed, that our kindness, instead of being directed and braced by principle, too often becomes languid and unmeaning; that it is exerted on improper objects, and out of season, and so is uncharitable in two ways, indulging those who should be chastised, and preferring their comfort to those who are really deserving. We are over-tender in dealing with sin and sinners. We are deficient in jealous custody of the revealed Truths which Christ has left us. We allow men to speak against the Church, its ordinances, or its teaching, without remonstrating with them. We do not separate from heretics, nay, we object to the word as if uncharitable; and when such texts are brought against us as St. John's command, not to show hospitality towards them, we are not slow to answer that they do not apply to us.

Now, I scarcely can suppose any one really means to say, for certain, that these commands are superseded in the present day, and is quite satisfied upon the point; it will rather be found that men who so speak, merely wish to put the subject from them. For a long while they have forgotten that there were any such commands in Scripture; they have lived as though there were not, and not being in circumstances which immediately called for the consideration of them, they have familiarized their minds to a contrary view of the matter, and built their opinions upon it. When reminded of the fact, they are sorry to have to consider it, as they perhaps avow. They perceive that it interferes with the line of conduct to which they are accustomed. They are vexed, not as if allowing themselves to be wrong, but as feeling conscious that a plausible argument (to say the least) may be maintained against them. And instead of daring to give this argument fair play, as in honesty they ought, they hastily satisfy themselves that objections may be taken against it, use some vague terms of disapprobation against those who use it, recur to, and dwell upon, their own habitual view of the benevolent and indulgent spirit of the Gospel, and then dismiss the subject altogether, as if it had never been brought before them. Observe *how* they rid themselves of it; it is by confronting it with other views of Christianity, which they consider incompatible with it; whereas the very problem which Christian duty requires us to accomplish, is the reconciling in our conduct opposite virtues. It is not difficult (comparatively speaking) to cultivate single virtues. A man takes some one partial view of his duty, whether severe or kindly, whether of action or of meditation: he enters into it with all his might, he opens his heart to its influence, and allows himself to be sent forward on its current. This is not difficult; there is no anxious vigilance or self-denial in it. On the contrary,

there is a pleasure often in thus sweeping along in one way ; and especially in matters of giving and conceding. Liberality is always popular, whatever be the subject of it ; and excites a glow of pleasure and self-approbation in the giver, even though it involves no sacrifice, nay, is exercised upon the property of others. Thus in the sacred province of religion, men are led on,—without any bad principle, without that utter dislike or ignorance of the Truth, or that self-conceit, which are chief instruments of Satan at this day, nor again from mere cowardice or worldliness, but from thoughtlessness, a sanguine temper, the excitement of the moment, the love of making others happy, susceptibility of flattery, and the habit of looking only one way,—led on to give up Gospel Truths, to consent to open the Church to the various denominations of error which abound among us, or to alter our Services so as to please the scoffer, the lukewarm, or the vicious. To be kind is their one principle of action ; and, when they find offence taken at the Church's creed, they begin to think how they may modify or curtail it, under the same sort of feeling as would lead them to be generous in a money transaction, or to accommodate another at the price of personal inconvenience. Not understanding that their religious privileges are a trust to be handed on to posterity, a sacred property entailed upon the Christian family, and their own in enjoyment rather than in possession, they act the spendthrift, and are lavish of the goods of others. Thus, for instance, they speak against the Anathemas of the Athanasian Creed, or of the Communion Service, or of certain of the Psalms, and wish to rid themselves of them. Undoubtedly, even the best specimens of these men are deficient in a due appreciation of the Christian Mysteries, and of their own responsibility in preserving and transmitting them ; yet, some of them are such truly “ good ” men, so amiable and feeling, so benevolent to the poor, and of such repute among all classes, in short, fulfil so excellently the office of shining like lights in the world, and witnesses of Him “ who went about doing good,” that those who most deplore their failing, will still be most desirous of excusing them personally, while they feel it a duty to withstand them. Sometimes it may be, that these persons cannot bring themselves to think evil of others ; and harbour men of heretical opinions or immoral life from the same easiness of temper which makes them fit subjects for the practices of the cunning and selfish in worldly matters. And sometimes they fasten on certain favourable points of character in the person they should discountenance, and cannot get themselves to attend to any but these ; arguing that he is certainly pious and well-meaning, and that his errors plainly do himself no harm ;—whereas the question is not about their effects on this or that individual, but simply

whether they *are* errors; and again, whether they are not certain to be injurious to the mass of men, or, on the long run, as it is called. Or they cannot bear to hurt another by the expression of their disapprobation, though it be that "his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord." Or perhaps they are deficient in keenness of intellectual perception as to the moral mischief of certain speculative opinions, as they consider them; and not knowing their ignorance enough to forbear the use of private judgment, nor having faith enough to acquiesce in God's word, or the decision of His Church, they incur the responsibility of serious changes. Or, perhaps they shelter themselves behind some confused notion, which they have taken up, of the peculiar character of our own Church, arguing that they belong to a tolerant Church, that it is but consistent as well as right in her members to be tolerant, and that they are but exemplifying tolerance in their own conduct, when they treat with indulgence those who are lax in creed or conduct. Now, if by the tolerance of our Church, it be meant that she does not countenance the use of fire and sword against those who separate from her, so far she is truly called a tolerant Church; but she is not tolerant of error, as those very formularies, which they wish to remove, testify; and if she retains within her bosom, proud intellects, and cold hearts, and unclean hands, and dispenses her blessings to those who disbelieve or are unworthy of them, this arises from other causes, certainly not from her principles; else were she guilty of Eli's sin, which may not be imagined.

Such is the defect of mind suggested to us by the instances of imperfection recorded of St. Barnabas; it will be more clearly understood by contrasting him with St. John. We cannot compare good men together in their points of excellence; but whether the one or the other of these Apostles had the greater share of the spirit of love, we all know, that any how the Beloved Disciple abounded in it. His General Epistle is full of exhortations to cherish that blessed temper, and his name is associated in our minds with such heavenly dispositions as are more immediately connected with it,—contemplativeness, serenity of soul, clearness of faith. Now see in what he differed from Barnabas; in uniting charity with a firm maintenance of the Truth as it is in Jesus. So far were his fervour and exuberance of charity from interfering with his zeal for God, that rather, the more he loved men, the more he desired to bring before them the great unchangeable Verities, to which they must submit, if they would see life, and on which a weak indulgence suffers them to shut their eyes. He loved the brethren, but he "loved them in the Truth."* He loved them for the Living Truth's sake which

* 3 John 1.

had redeemed them, for the Truth which was in them, for the Truth which was the measure of their spiritual attainments. He loved the Church so honestly, that he was stern towards those who troubled her. He loved the world so wisely, that he preached the Truth in it; yet, if men rejected it, he did not love them so inordinately as to forget the supremacy of the Truth, as the Word of Him who is above all. Let it never be forgotten then, when we picture to ourselves this saintly Apostle, this unearthly Prophet, who fed upon the sights and voices of the world of Spirits, and looked out heavenwards day by day for Him, whom he had once seen in the flesh, that this is he who gives us that command about shunning heretics, which whether of force in this age or not, still certainly in any age is (what men now call) severe; and that this command of his is but in unison with the fearful descriptions he gives in other parts of his inspired writings of the Presence, the Law, and the Judgments of Almighty God. Who can deny that the Apocalypse from beginning to end is a very fearful book; I may say, the most fearful book in Scripture, full of accounts of the wrath of God? Yet, it is written by the Apostle of love. It is possible then, for a man to be at once kind as Barnabas, yet zealous as Paul. Strictness and tenderness had no "sharp contention" in the breast of the beloved Disciple; they found their perfect union, yet distinct exercise, in the grace of Charity, which is the fulfilling of the whole Law.

I wish I saw any prospect of this element of zeal and holy sternness springing up among us, to temper and give character to the languid unmeaning benevolence which we misname Christian love. I have no hope of my country till I see it. Many schools of Religion and Ethics are to be found among us, and they all profess to magnify, in one shape or other, what they consider the principle of love; but what they lack is, a firm maintenance of that characteristic of the Divine Nature, which, in accommodation to our infirmity, is named by St. John and his brethren, the wrath of God. Let this be well observed. There are men who are advocates of Expedience; these, as far as they are religious at all, resolve conscience into an instinct of mere benevolence, and refer all the dealings of Providence with His creatures to the same one Attribute. Hence, they consider all punishment to be remedial, a means to an end, deny that the wo threatened against sinners is of eternal duration, and explain away the doctrine of the Atonement. There are others, who place religion in the mere exercise of the excited feelings; and these too look upon their God and Saviour, as far (that is) as they themselves are concerned, solely as a God of love. They believe themselves to be converted from sin to righteousness by the mere manifestation of that love to their souls, drawing them on to

Him ; and they imagine that that same love, untired by any possible transgressions on their part, will surely carry forward every individual so chosen to final triumph. Moreover, as accounting that Christ has already done every thing for their salvation, they do not feel that a moral change is necessary on their part, or rather, they consider that the Vision of revealed love works it in them spontaneously ; in either case dispensing with all laborious efforts, all "fear and trembling," all self-denial in "working out their salvation," nay, looking upon such qualifications with suspicion, as leading to a supposed self-confidence and spiritual pride. Once more, there are others of a mystical turn of mind, with untutored imaginations and subtle intellects, who follow the theories of the old Gentile philosophy. These, too, are accustomed to make love the one principle of life and providence in heaven and earth, as if it were a pervading Spirit of the world, finding a sympathy in every heart, absorbing all things into itself, and kindling a rapturous enjoyment in all who contemplate it. They sit at home speculating, and separate moral perfection from action. These men either hold, or are in the way to hold, that the human soul is pure by nature ; sin an external principle corrupting it ; evil, destined to final annihilation ; Truth attained by means of the imagination ; conscience, a taste ; holiness, a passive contemplation of God ; and obedience, a mere pleasurable work. It is difficult to discriminate accurately between these three schools of opinion, without using words of unseemly familiarity ; yet I have said enough for those who wish to pursue the subject. Let it be observed then, that these three systems, however different from each other in their principles and spirit, yet all agree in this one respect, viz., in overlooking that the Christian's God is represented in Scripture, not only as a God of love, but also as "a consuming fire." Rejecting the testimony of Scripture, no wonder they also reject that of conscience, which assuredly forebodes ill to the sinner, but which, as the exclusive religionist maintains, is not the voice of God at all,—or is a mere benevolence, according to the disciple of Utility,—or, in the judgment of the more mystical sort, a kind of passion for the beautiful and sublime. Regarding thus "the goodness" only, and not "the severity of God," no wonder that they ungird their loins and become effeminate ; no wonder that their ideal notion of a perfect Church, is a Church which lets every one go on his own way, and disclaims any right to pronounce an opinion, much less inflict a censure on religious error.

But those who think themselves and others in risk of an eternal curse, dare not be thus indulgent. Here then lies our want at the present day, for this we must pray,—that a reform may come in the spirit and power of Elias. We must pray God thus "to revive His work in the midst of

the years ;" to send us a severe Discipline, the Order of St. Paul and St. John, "speaking the Truth in love," and "loving in the Truth,"—a Witness of Christ, "knowing the terror of the Lord," fresh from the presence of Him "whose heads and hairs are white like wool, as white as snow, and whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and out of His mouth a sharp sword,"—a Witness not shrinking from proclaiming His wrath, as a real characteristic of His glorious nature, though expressed in human language for our sakes, proclaiming the narrowness of the way of life, the difficulty of attaining Heaven, the danger of riches, the necessity of taking up our cross, the excellence and beauty of self-denial and austerity, the hazard of disbelieving the Catholic Faith, and the duty of zealously contending for it.

Thus only will the tidings of mercy come with force to the souls of men with a constraining power and with an abiding impress, when hope and fear go together ; then only will Christians be successful in fight, "quitting themselves like men," conquering and ruling the fury of the world, and maintaining the Church in purity and power, when they condense their feelings by a severe discipline, and are loving in the midst of firmness, strictness, and holiness. Then only can we prosper, (under the blessing and grace of Him who is the Spirit both of love and of truth,) when the heart of Paul is vouchsafed to us, to withstand even Peter and Barnabas, if ever they are overcome by mere human feelings, to "know henceforth no man after the flesh," to put away from us sister's son, or nearer relative, to relinquish the sight of them, the hope of them, and the desire of them, when He commands, who raises up friends even to the lonely, if they trust in Him, and will give us "within His walls a name better than of sons and of daughters, an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."*

* Isai. lvi. 4, 5.

SERMON XXIV.

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST.

REBUKING SIN.

MARK vi. 18.

John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

IN the Collect of this day, we pray God to enable us "boldly to rebuke vice" after the example of St. John the Baptist, who died a Martyr in the faithful discharge of this duty.

Herod the Tetrarch had taken his brother's wife. John the Baptist protested against so heinous a sin ; and the guilty king, though he could not bring himself to forsake it, yet respected the prophet, and tried to please him in other ways ; but Herodias, the proud and cruel woman whom he had married, resented his interference, and at length effected his death. I need not go through the details of this atrocious history, which are well known to every reader of the Gospels.

St. John the Baptist had a most difficult office to fulfil ; that of rebuking a king. Not that it is difficult for a man of rude arrogant mind to say a harsh thing to men in power,—nay, rather, it is a gratification to such a one ; but it is difficult to rebuke *well*, that is, at a right time, in a right spirit, and a right manner. The Holy Baptist rebuked Herod without making him angry ; therefore he must have rebuked him with gravity, temper, sincerity, and an evident good-will towards him. On the other hand, he spoke so firmly, sharply, and faithfully, that his rebuke cost him his life.

We who now live have not that extreme duty put upon us with which St. John was laden ; yet every one of us has a share in his office, inasmuch as we are all bound "to rebuke vice boldly," when we have fit opportunities for so doing. I proceed then to make some remarks upon the duty, as enforced upon us by to-day's Festival.

Now, it is plain that there are two sorts of men in the world ;—those who put themselves forward, and speak much ; and those who retire, and

from indolence, timidity, or fastidiousness, do not care to express an opinion on what comes before them. Neither of these classes will act the part of St. John the Baptist in their intercourse with others: the retiring will not rebuke vice at all; the bold and ill-mannered will take a pleasure in giving their judgment, whether they are fit judges or not, whether they ought to speak or not, and at all times proper and improper.

These self-appointed censors of vice are not to be countenanced or tolerated by any serious Christian. The subjects of their attack are often open to censure, it is true; and should be censured, but not by them. Yet these men take upon them, on their own authority, to blame them;—often, because those whose duty it is, neglect to do so; and then they flatter themselves with the notion that they are energetic champions of virtue, strenuous and useful guardians of public morals or popular rights. There is a multitude of such men in these days, who succeed the better, because they conceal their names; and are thus relieved of the trouble of observing delicacy in their manner of rebuking, escape the retaliation which the assailed party may inflict on an open assailant, and are able to dispense with such requisites of personal character and deportment as are ordinarily expected from those who assume the office of the Baptist. And, by speaking against men of note, they gratify the bad passions of the multitude; fond, as it ever is, of tales of crime, and malevolent towards the great; and thus they increase their influence, and come to be looked up to and feared.

Now such officious accusers of vice are, I say, to be disowned by all who wish to be really Christians. Every one has his place, one to obey, another to rule, a third to rebuke. It is not religious to undertake an office without a commission. John the Baptist was miraculously called to the duties of a reformer and teacher. Afterwards, an Order of men was appointed for the performance of the same services; and this order remains to this day in an uninterrupted succession. Those who take upon them to rebuke vice without producing credentials of their authority, are intruding upon the office of God's Ministers. They may indeed succeed in their usurpation, they may become popular, be supported by the many, and be recognised even by the persons whom they attack, still the function of Censor is from God, whose final judgment it precedes and shadows forth: and not a whole generation of self-willed men can bestow on their organ the powers of a divine ambassador. It is our part, then, anxiously to guard against the guilt of acquiescing in the claims of such false prophets, lest we fall under the severity of our Lord's prediction: "I am come in My Father's name," he says, "and ye receive Me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."*

* 1 John v. 43.

I notice this peculiarity of the Reprover's office, as founded on a Divine Commission, and the consequent sin of undertaking it without a call, for another reason. Besides these bad men, who clamour against vice for gain and envy's sake, I know there are others of a better stamp, who imagine that they ought to rebuke, when in truth they ought not; and who, on finding that they cannot do the office well, or on getting into trouble in attempting it, are perplexed and discouraged, or consider that they suffer for righteousness' sake. But our duty is commonly a far more straightforward matter than excited and over-sensitive minds are apt to suppose, that is, as far as concerns our *knowing* it; and, when we find ourselves perplexed to ascertain it, we should ask ourselves, whether we have not embarrassed our course by some unnecessary or self-willed conduct of our own. For instance, when men imagine it to be their duty to rebuke their superiors, they get into difficulties, for the simple reason, that it is and ever will be difficult to do another man's duty. When the young take upon them to set right their elders, private Christians speak against the Clergy, the Clergy attempt to direct their Bishops, or servants their masters, they will find that, generally speaking, the attempt does not succeed; and perhaps they will impute their failure to circumstances,—whereas, the real reason is that there was no call on them to rebuke at all. There is ever, indeed, a call on them to keep from sin themselves in all things, which itself is a silent protest against whatever is wrong in high places,—and this they cannot avoid, and need not wish to avoid; but very seldom, only in extreme cases, for instance, as, when the Faith is in jeopardy, or in order to protect or rescue the simple minded, is a man called upon in the way of duty, directly to blame or denounce his superiors.

And in truth we have quite enough to do in the way of rebuking vice, if we confine our censure to those who are the lawful subjects of it. These are our equals and our inferiors. Here, again, it is easy to use violent language towards those who are below us in station, to be arrogant, to tyrannize; but such was not St. John the Baptist's manner of reproof. He reprov'd under the prospect of suffering for his faithfulness; and we should never use a strong word, however true it be, without being willing to acquiesce in some penalty or other should it so happen, as the seal of our earnestness. We must not suppose that our inferiors are without power to annoy us, because they are inferior. We depend on the poor as well as on the rich. Nor, by inferiors, do I mean those merely who are in a lower rank of society. Herod was St. John's inferior; the greatest king is, in one sense, inferior to God's Ministers, and is to be approached by them with all honour indeed and loyal service, but without trepidation of mind or cowardice, without for-

getting that they are servants of the Church, gifted with their power by a divine appointment. And what is true even in the instance of the King himself, is much more applicable in the case of the merely wealthy or ennobled. But is it a light matter to reprove such men? And when can we do so without the risk of suffering for it? Who is sufficient for these things, without the guidance and strength of Him who died to purchase for His Church this high authority?

Again, parents are bound to rebuke their children; but here the office is irksome for a different reason. It is misplaced affection, not fear, which interferes here with the performance of our duty. And, besides, parents are indolent as well as over-fond. They look to their home as a release from the world's cares, and cannot bear to make duties in a quarter where they would find a recreation. And they have their preferences and partialities about their children; and being alternately harsh and weakly indulgent, are not respected by them, even when they seasonably rebuke them.

And as to rebuke those who are inferior to us in the temporal appointments of Providence, is a serious work, so also, much more, does it require a ripeness in Christian holiness to rebuke our equals suitably; and this, first, because we fear their ridicule and censure; next, because the failings of our equals commonly lie in the same line as our own, and every considerate person is aware, that, in rebuking another, he is binding himself to a strict and religious life, which we naturally shrink from doing. Accordingly, it has come to pass, that Christians, by a sort of tacit agreement, wink at each other's faults, and keep silence; whereas, if each of us forced himself to make his neighbour sensible when he did wrong, he would both benefit another, and, through God's blessing, would bind himself also to a more consistent profession. Who can say how much harm is done by thus countenancing the imperfections of our friends and equals? The standard of Christian morals is lowered; the service of God is mixed up with devotion to Mammon; and thus society is constantly tending to a heathen state. And this culpable toleration of vice is sanctioned by the manners of the present age, which seems to consider it a mark of good breeding not to be solicitous about the faith or conduct of those around us, as if their private views and habits were nothing to us; which would have more pretence of truth in it, were they merely our fellow-creatures, but is evidently false in the case of those who all the while profess to be Christians, who imagine that they gain the privileges of the Gospel by their profession, while they bring scandal on it by their lives.

Now, if it be asked, what rules can be given for rebuking vice?—I observe, that, as on the one hand to perform the office of a censor re-

quires a maturity and consistency of principle seen and acknowledged, so is it also the necessary result of possessing it. They who reprove with the greatest propriety, from their weight of character, are generally the very men who are also best qualified for reproving. To rebuke well is a gift which grows with the need of exercising it. Not that any one will gain it without an effort on his part; he must overcome false shame, timidity, and undue delicacy, and learn to be prompt and collected in withstanding evil; but after all, his mode of doing it will depend mainly on his *general* character. The more his habitual temper is formed after the law of Christ, the more discreet, unexceptionable, and graceful will be his censures, the more difficult to escape or to resist.

What I mean is this: cultivate in your general deportment a cheerful, honest, manly temper; and you will find fault well, because you will do so in a natural way. Aim at viewing all things in a plain and candid light, and at calling them by their right names. Be frank, do not keep your notions of right and wrong to yourselves, nor, on some conceit that the world is too bad to be taught the Truth, suffer it to sin in word or deed without rebuke. Do not allow friend or stranger in the familiar intercourse of society to advance false opinions, nor shrink from stating your own; and do this in singleness of mind and love. Persons are to be found, who tell their neighbours of their faults in a strangely solemn way, with a great parade, as if they were doing something extraordinary; and such men not only offend those whom they wish to set right, but also foster in themselves a spirit of self-complacency. Such a mode of finding fault is inseparably connected with a notion that they themselves are far better than the parties they blame; whereas the single-hearted Christian will find fault, not austere-ly or gloomily, but in love; not stiffly, but naturally, gently, and as a matter of course, just as he would tell his friend of some obstacle in his path, which was likely to throw him down, but without any absurd feeling of superiority over him, because he was able to do so. His feeling is, "I have done a good office to you, and you must in turn serve me." And though his advice be not always taken as he meant it, yet he will not dwell on the pain occasioned to himself by such a result of his interference; being conscious that, in truth, there ever is much to correct in his mode of doing his duty, knowing that his intention was good, and being determined anyhow to make light of his failure, except so far as to be more cautious in future against even the appearance of rudeness or intemperance in his manner.

These are a few suggestions on an important subject. We daily influence each other for good or evil; let us not be the occasion of mis-

leading others by our silence, when we ought to speak. Recollect St. Paul's words :—"Be not partaker of other men's sins : keep thyself pure."^{*}

SERMON XXV.

THE FEAST OF ST. PETER THE APOSTLE.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

LUKE vii. 28.

I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist ; but he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.

ST. PETER's day suitably follows the day of St. John the Baptist ; for thus we have a striking memento as the text suggests, of the especial dignity of the Christian Ministry over all previous Ministries which Almighty God has appointed. St. John was "much more than a Prophet ;" he was as great as any messenger of God that had ever been born ; yet the least in the Kingdom of heaven, the least of Christ's Ministers, was greater than he. And this, I observe, is a reflection especially fitted for this Festival, because the Apostle Peter is taken in various parts of the Gospel, as the appropriate type and representative of the Christian ministry.[†]

Now, let us consider in what the peculiar dignity of the Christian Minister consists. Evidently in this, that he is the representative of Christ ; for, as Christ is infinitely above all other messengers from God, he who stands in His stead, must be superior beyond compare, to all Ministers of religion, whether Prophets, Priests, Lawgivers, Judges, or Kings, whom Almighty God ever commissioned. Moses, Aaron, Samuel, and David, were shadows of the Saviour ; but the Minister of the Gospel is His present substitute. As a type or prophecy of Grace is less than a pledge and means, as a Jewish sacrifice is less than a Gospel sacrament, so are Moses and Elias less by office than the repre-

* 1 Tim. v. 22. † Vide Matt. xvi. 18, 19. Luke xxii. 29, 30. John xxi. 15—17.

sentatives of Christ. This I consider to be evident, as soon as stated ; the only question being, whether there is reason for thinking, that Christ *has*, in matter of fact, left representatives behind Him ; and this, I proceed to show, Scripture enables us to determine in the affirmative.

Now, in the first place, as we all know, Christ chose twelve out of His disciples, whom He called Apostles, to be His representatives even during His own ministry. And He gave them the power of doing the wonderful works which He did Himself. Of course I do not say He gave them equal power ; (God forbid !) but He gave them a certain sufficient portion of His power. "He gave them power," says St. Luke, "and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases ; and He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick."* And He expressly made them His substitutes to the world at large ; so that to receive them was to receive Himself. "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me."† Such was their principal power before His passion, similar to that which He principally exercised, viz. the commission to preach and to perform bodily cures. But when He had wrought out the Atonement for human sin upon the Cross, and purchased for man the gift of the Holy Ghost, then He gave them a higher commission ; and still, be it observed, parallel to that which He Himself then assumed. "*As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.*" And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."‡ Here then the Apostles became Christ's representatives in the power of His Spirit, for the remission of sins, as before they were His representatives as regards miraculous cures, and preaching His Kingdom.

The following texts supply additional evidence that the Apostles were commissioned in Christ's stead, and inform us likewise in detail of some of the particular offices included in their commission. "Let a man so account of us, as of the *Ministers* of Christ, and *Stewards of the Mysteries* of God." "Ye received me as an *Angel*" or heavenly Messenger "of God, even as *Christ Jesus*." "*We are Ambassadors* for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you *in Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God."§

The Apostles then, standing in Christ's place, were consequently exalted by office far above any divine Messengers before them. We come to the same conclusion from considering the sacred treasures committed to their custody, which (not to mention their miraculous

* Luke ix. 1. 2.

† Matt. i. 40.

‡ John xx. 21—23.

§ 1 Cor. iv. 1. Gal. iv. 14. 2 Cor. v. 20.

powers, which is beside our present purpose,) were those peculiar spiritual blessings which flow from Christ as a Saviour, as a Prophet, Priest, and King.

These blessings are commonly designated in Scripture as "the Spirit," or "the gift of the Holy Ghost." John the Baptist said of himself and Christ; I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.* In this respect, Christ's Ministrations were above all that had ever been before Him, in bringing with them the gift of the Holy Ghost, that one gift, one, yet multiform, sevenfold in its operation, in which all spiritual blessedness is included. Accordingly, our Lord was solemnly anointed with the Holy Ghost Himself, as an initiation into His Ministerial office. He was manifested as receiving, that He might be believed on as giving. He was thus commissioned, according to the Prophet, "to preach good tidings," "to bind up," "to give the oil of joy for mourning." Therefore, in like manner, the Apostles also were anointed with the same heavenly gift for the same Ministerial office. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Such as was the consecration of the Master, such was that of the Disciples; and such as His, were the offices to which they were thereby admitted.

Christ is a Prophet, as authoritatively revealing the will of God and the Gospel of grace. So also were the Apostles; "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me;" "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit."†

Christ is a Priest, as forgiving sin, and imparting other needful divine gifts. The Apostles, too, had this power; "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." "Let a man so account of us as . . . Stewards of the Mysteries of God."

Christ is a King, as ruling the Church; and the Apostles rule it in His stead. "I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."‡

The gift, or office cannot be named, which belongs to our Lord as the Christ, which He did not in its degree transfer to His Apostles by the communication of that Spirit through which He Himself wrought; one of course excepted, the One great work, which none else in the whole world could sustain, of being the Atoning Sacrifice for all man-

* Matt. iii. 11.

† Luke x. 16. 1 Thess. iv. 8.

‡ Luke xxi. 29, 30.

kind. So far no one can take His place, and "His glory He does not give to another." His death upon the cross is the sole Meritorious Cause, the sole Source of spiritual blessing to our guilty race; but as to those offices and gifts, which flow from this Atonement, preaching, teaching, reconciling, absolving, censuring, dispensing grace, ruling, ordaining, these all are included in the Apostolic Commission, which is instrumental and representative in His absence. "As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you." His gifts are not confined to Himself. "The whole house is filled with the odour of the ointment."

This being granted, however, as regards the Apostles themselves, some one may be disposed to inquire, whether their triple office has descended to Christian Ministers after them. I say their *triple* office, for few persons will deny that some portion of their commission still remains among us. The notion that there is no divine appointment of one man above another for Ministerial duties is not a common one, and we need not refute it. But it is very common for men to believe only so far as they can see and understand; and, because they are witnesses of the process and effects of instructing and ruling, and not of (what may be called) "the ministry of reconciliation," to accept Christ's Ministers as representatives of His Prophetic and Regal, not of His Priestly authority. Assuming then their claim to inherit two portions of His Anointing, I shall confine myself to the question of their possessing the third likewise: not however with a view of proving it, but rather of removing such antecedent difficulties as are likely to prejudice the mind against it.

By a Priest, in a Christian sense, is meant an appointed channel by which the peculiar Gospel blessings are conveyed to mankind, one who has power to apply to individuals those gifts which Christ has promised us generally as the fruit of His mediation. This power was possessed by the Apostles; I am now to show that it is possessed by their Successors likewise.

1. Now, first, that there is a strong line of distinction between the Apostles and other Christian Ministers, I readily grant; nay, rather I would maintain it to be so clearly marked that there is no possibility of confusing together those respects in which they resemble with those in which they differ from their brethren. The Apostles were, not only Ministers of Christ, but first founders of His Church; and their gifts and offices, so far forth as they had reference to this part of their commission, doubtless were but occasional and extraordinary, and ended with themselves. They were organs of Revelation, inspired Teachers, in some respects infallible, gifted with divers tongues, workers of miracles; and none but they are such. The duration of any gift depends

upon the need which it supplies ; that which has answered its purpose ends, that which is still necessary is graciously continued. Such at least seems to be the rule of a Merciful Providence. Therefore it is, that the Christian Ministry still includes in it the office of teaching, for education is necessary for every soul born into the world ; and the office of governing, for “decency and order” are still necessary for the quiet and union of the Christian brotherhood. And, for the same reason, it is natural at first sight to suppose, that the office of applying the gifts of grace should be continued also, while there is guilt to be washed away, sinners to be reconciled, believers to be strengthened, matured, comforted. What warrant have we from the nature of the case, for making any distinction between the ministry of teaching and the ministry of reconciliation ? if one is still committed to us, why not the other also ?

And it will be observed, that the only real antecedent difficulty which attaches to the doctrine of the Christian Priesthood, is obviated by Scripture itself. It might be thought that the power of remitting and retaining sins was too great to be given to sinful man over his fellows ; but in matter of fact it was committed to the Apostles without restriction, though they were not infallible in what they did. “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” The grant was in the very form of it unconditional, and left to their Christian discretion. What has once been given, may be continued. I consider this remark to be of weight in a case like the present, where the very nature of the professed gift is the only considerable reason against the fact of its bestowal.

2. But all this is on the bare antecedent view of the case. In fact, our Lord himself has decided the question, by declaring that His presence, by means of His Apostles, *should* be with the Church to the end of the world. He promised this on the solemn occasion of His leaving them ; He declared it when He bade them make converts, baptize, and teach. As well may we doubt whether it is our duty to preach and proselyte, and prepare men for Heaven, as that His Apostolic Presence is with us for those purposes. His words then at first sight even go to include *all* the gifts vouchsafed to His first Ministers ; far from having a scanty grant of them, so large is the promise, that we are obliged to find out reasons to justify us in considering the Successors of the Apostles in any respects less favoured than themselves. Such reasons we know are to be found, and lead us to distinguish the extraordinary gifts from the ordinary, a distinction which the event justifies ; but what is there either in Scripture or in Church History to make us place the commission of reconciliation among those which are extraordinary ?

3. In the next place, it is deserving of notice that this distinction between ordinary and extraordinary gifts, is really made in Scripture itself, and that among the extraordinary there is no mention made of the sacerdotal power. No one can doubt, that on the day of Pentecost the formal inauguration of the Apostles took place into their high and singular office of building the Church of Christ. They were "wise Master-builders, according to the grace given them;" and that grace was extraordinary. However, among those gifts, "tongues and visions, prophecies and wonders," their priestly power is not enumerated. On the contrary, that power had been previously conferred, according to the passage already cited, when Christ breathed on them, and gave them, through the Holy Ghost, the authority to remit and retain sins.*

* The following passage supplies a corroboration of the above argument, and carries it on to the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession:—"The very first act of the Apostles, after Christ was gone out of their sight, was the ordination of Matthias in the room of the traitor Judas. That ordination is related very minutely. Every particular of it is full of instruction; but at present I wish to draw attention to one circumstance more especially: namely, the *time* when it occurred. It was contrived (if one may say so) exactly to fall within *the very short interval* which elapsed between the departure of our Lord and the arrival of the Comforter in His place: on that 'little while,' during which the Church was comparatively left alone in the world. Then it was that St. Peter rose and declared with authority, that the time was come for supplying the vacancy which Judas had made. 'One,' said he, 'must be ordained;' and without delay they proceeded to the ordination. Of course, St. Peter must have had from our Lord express authority for this step. Otherwise it would seem most natural to defer a transaction so important until the unerring Guide, the Holy Ghost, should have come among them, as they knew He would in a few days. On the other hand, since the Apostles were eminently Apostles of our Incarnate Lord, since their very being, as *Apostles*, depended entirely on their personal mission from Him, (which is the reason why catalogues are given of them, with such scrupulous care, in many of the holy books): in that regard one should naturally have expected that He Himself before His departure would have supplied the vacancy by personal designation. But we see it was not His pleasure to do so. As the Apostles afterwards brought on the ordination sooner, so He had deferred it longer than might have been expected. Both ways it should seem as if there were a purpose of bringing the event within those ten days, *during which*, as I said, *the church was left to herself*; left to exercise her faith and hope, much as Christians are left now, without any *miraculous* aid or extraordinary illumination from above. Then, at that moment of the New Testament history, in which the circumstances of believers corresponded most nearly to what they had been since miracles and inspiration ceased,—just at that time it pleased our Lord that a fresh Apostle should be consecrated, with authority and commission as ample as the former enjoyed. In a word, it was His will that the eleven Disciples alone, not Himself personally, should name the successor of Judas; and that they chose the right person, He gave testimony very soon after, by sending His Holy Spirit on St. Matthias, as richly as on St. John, St. James, or St. Peter."—*Tracts for the Times*, vol. ii. No. 52.

And further, I would remind you, that this is certainly our Church's deliberate view of the subject; for she expressly puts into the Bishop's mouth at ordination the very words here used by our Saviour to His Apostles. "Receive the Holy Ghost;" "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained;" words, which it were inexpressibly profane for man to use to man, except by a plain divine commission to do so.

4. But again, has not the Gospel Sacraments? and have not Sacraments, as pledges and means of grace, a priestly nature? If so, the question of the existence of a Christian Priesthood, is narrowed at once to the simple question, whether or not it is probable that so precious an ordinance as a channel of grace would be committed by Providence to the custody of certain guardians. The tendency of opinions at this day is to believe that nothing more is necessary for acceptance than faith in God's promise of mercy; whereas it is certain from Scripture, that the gift of reconciliation is not conveyed to individuals except through appointed ordinances. Christ has interposed a something between Himself and the soul; and if it is not inconsistent with the liberty of the Gospel that a Sacrament should interfere, there is no antecedent inconsistency in a keeper of the Sacrament attending upon it. Moreover, the very circumstance that a standing Ministry has existed from the first, leads on to the inference that that Ministry was intended to take charge of the Sacraments; and thus the facts of the case suggest an interpretation of our Lord's words, when He committed to St. Peter "the *keys* of the Kingdom of Heaven."

I would have this Scripture truth considered attentively; viz. that Sacraments are the channels of the peculiar Christian privileges, and not merely (as many men think, and as the rite of Confirmation really is,) *seals* of the covenant. A man may object indeed, that in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans nothing is said about channels and instruments; that faith is represented as the sole medium of justification. But I will refer him by way of reply, to the same Apostle's speech to Festus and Agrippa, where he describes Christ as saying to him on his miraculous conversion, "Rise and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a Minister and a Witness," sending him forth, as it might appear, to preach the Gospel, without instrumentality of Ordinance or Minister. Had we but this account of his conversion, who would not have supposed, that he who was "to open men's eyes, and turn them from darkness to light," had been pardoned and accepted at once upon his faith, without rite or form? Yet from other parts of the history, we learn what is here omitted, viz. that an especial revelation was made to Ananias, lest Saul should go without baptism;

and that, so far from his being justified immediately on his faith, he was bid not to tarry, but “to arise and be baptized, and to wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* So dangerous is it to attempt to prove a negative from insulated passages of Scripture.

Here then we have a clear instance in St. Paul's own case, that there are priestly Services between the soul and God, even under the Gospel; that though Christ has purchased inestimable blessings for our race, yet that it is still necessary ever to apply them to individuals by visible means; and if so, I confess, that to me at least it seems more likely antecedently, that such services should have, than that they should lack, an appropriate minister. But here again we are not left to mere conjecture, as I proceed to show.

5. You well know that the benefits of the Atonement are frequently represented in Scripture under the figure of spiritual food, bread from heaven, the water that never faileth, and in more sacred language, as the communion of the Body and Blood of the Divine Sacrifice. Now, this special Christian benefit is there connected, as on the one hand with an outward rite, so on the other with certain appointed Dispensers. So that the very context of Scripture leads us on from the notion of a priestly service to that of a priesthood.

“Who then is that faithful and wise *Steward*,” says Christ, “whom his Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their *portion of food* in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.”† Now, I infer from this passage; first, that there are, under the Gospel, especial Dispensers of the Christian's spiritual food, in other words (if the word “food”‡ may be interpreted from the parallel of the sixth chapter of John,) Dispensers of invisible grace, or Priests;—next, that they are to continue to the Church in every age till the end, for it is said “Blessed is he, whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing;”—further, that the Minister mentioned is also “Ruler over His household,” as in the case of the Apostles, uniting the Regal with the Sacerdotal office;—lastly, the word “Steward,” which incidentally occurs in the passage, a title applied by St. Paul to the Apostles, affords an additional reason for supposing that other like titles, such as “Ambassadors of Christ,” given to the Apostles, do also belong in a true and sufficient sense to their Successors.

6. These considerations in favour of the existence of a Christian Priesthood, are strengthened by observing that the office of intercession,

* Acts xxvi. 16—18; xxii. 16; ix. 17. Vide also xiii. 2, 3.

† Luke xii. 42.

‡ σιτομέτριον.

which though not a peculiarity, is ever characteristic of the Priestly Order, is spoken of in Scripture as a sort of prerogative of the Gospel Ministry. For instance, Isaiah, speaking of Christian times, says, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."* In the Acts of the Apostles we find Christ's ministers engaged in this sacred service, according to the prophecy. "There were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, foster-brother to Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted,"† the Holy Ghost separated two of them for His work. This "ministering" to the Lord with fasting was surely some solemn intercessory service. And this agrees with a passage in St. James's Epistle, which seems to invest the Elders of the Church with this same privilege of the priesthood. "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, (not pray with him merely,) anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith (not the oil merely,) shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." In like manner St. Paul speaks of Epaphras as "our dear fellow-servant, who is for you," that is, for the Colossians to whom he is writing, "a faithful minister of Christ." Presently he explains what was the service which Epaphras did for them: "always labouring fervently for you in prayer, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."‡

7. We may end these remarks by recurring to the instances of St. Peter and St. John the Baptist; who, as types of God's ordained servants, before and after His Son's coming, may serve to explain the office of ordinary Christian Ministers. Even the lowest of them is "greater than John." Now, what was it that he wanted? Was it the *knowledge of Gospel doctrine*? No surely; no words can be clearer than his concerning the New Covenant. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "He that cometh from above, is above all. . . . He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth him."§

* Is. lxii. 6, 7.

† James v. 14, 15. Col. i. 7. iv. 12.

‡ Acts xiii. 1, 2.

§ John i. 29. iii. 31—36.

Therefore, the Baptist lacked not the full Christian *doctrine* ; what he did lack, was (as he says himself) the Baptism of *the Spirit*, conveying a commission from Christ the Saviour, in all His manifold gifts, ordinary and extraordinary, Regal and Sacerdotal. John was not inferior to us Gospel Ministers in knowledge, but in power.

On the other hand, if, as I have made appear, St. Peter's ministerial office continues as regards ordinary purposes, in the persons of those who come after him, we are bound to understand our Lord's blessing, pronounced in the first instance upon him, as descending in due measure on the least of us His Ministers who "keep the faith," Peter being but the representative and type of them all. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father, which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." August and glorious promise ! Can it be, that it is all expended on St. Peter, how great soever that noble Apostle ? Is it inserted in the "everlasting Gospel," to witness merely of one long since departed ? Is it the practice of the inspired word to exalt individuals ? Does not the very exuberance of the blessing resist any such niggardly use of it ? Does it not flow over in spite of us, till our unbelief is vanquished by the graciousness of Him who spoke it ? Is it, in short, any thing but the prejudices of education, which prevent so many of us from receiving it in that fulness of grace in which it is poured out ?

I say our *prejudices*,—for these surely are the cause of our inconsistency in faith ; adopting, as we do, a rule of Scripture interpretation, which carries us a certain way, and stops short of the whole counsel of God, and should teach us nothing, or a great deal more. If the promises to Christ's Apostles are not fulfilled in the Church for ever after, why should the blessing attaching to the Sacraments extend after the first age ? Why should the Lord's Supper be now the Communion of the Lord's Body and Blood ? Why should Baptism convey spiritual privileges ? Why should any part of Scripture afford permanent instruction ? Why should the way of life be any longer narrow ? Why should the burden of the Cross be necessary for every disciple of Christ ? Why should the Spirit of adoption any longer be promised us ? Why should separation from the world be now a duty ? Happy indeed it is for men that they *are* inconsistent ; for then, though they lose some part of a Christian's faith, at least they keep a portion. This will happen in quiet times, and in the case of those who are of mature years, and

whose minds have been long made up on the subject of religion. But should a time of controversy arise, then such inconsistencies become of fearful moment as regards the multitude called Christian, who have not any decided convictions to rest upon. Inconsistency of creed is sure to attract the notice of the intellect, unless habit has reconciled the heart to it. Therefore, in a speculative age, such as our own, a religious education which involves such inconsistency, is most dangerous, to the unformed Christian, who will set straight his traditionary creed by unlearning the portion of truth it contains, rather than by adding that in which it is deficient. Hence, the lamentable spectacle, so commonly seen, of men, who deny the Apostolic commission proceeding to degrade the Eucharist from a Sacrament to a bare commemorative rite ; or to make Baptism such a mere outward form, and sign of profession, as it would be childish or fanciful to revere. And reasonably ; for they who think it superstitious to believe that particular persons are channels of grace, are but consistent in denying virtue to particular ordinances. Nor do they stop even here ; for denying the grace of baptism, they proceed to deny the doctrine of original sin, for which that grace is the remedy.* Further denying the doctrine of original sin, they necessarily impair the doctrine of the Atonement, and so prepare a way for the denial of our Lord's divinity. Again, denying the power of the Sacraments on the ground of its *mysteriousness*, demanding from the very texts of Scripture the fullest proof of it conceivable, and thinking little of the blessedness of "not seeing, and yet believing," they naturally proceed to object to the doctrine of the Trinity as obstructing and obscuring the simplicity (as they consider it,) of the Gospel, and but indirectly deducible from the extant documents of inspiration. Lastly, after they have thus divested the divine remedies of sin, and the treatment necessary for the sinner, of their solemnity and awe, having made the whole scheme of salvation of as intelligible and ordinary a character as the repair of any accident in the works of man, having robbed Faith of its mysteries, the Sacraments of their virtue, the Priesthood of its commission, no wonder that sin itself is soon considered a venial matter, moral evil as a mere imperfection, man as involved in no great peril or misery, his duties of no very arduous or anxious nature. In a word, religion, as such, is in the way to disappear from the mind altogether ; and in its stead a mere cold worldly morality, a decent regard to the claims of society, a cultivation of the benevolent affections, and a gentleness and polish of external deportment, will be supposed to constitute the entire duties of that being, who is conceived

* E. g. A Dissenting Catechism has lately been published in the country for popular use, in which the doctrine of original sin is denied, by way of meeting the charge of cruelty towards children, as involved in the omission of infant baptism.

in sin, and the child of wrath, is redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, is born again and sustained by the Spirit through the invincible strength of Sacraments, and called, through self-denial and sanctification of the inward man, to the Eternal Presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Such is the course and the issue of unbelief, though beginning in what the world calls trifles. Beware then, O my Brethren, of entering a way which leads to death. Fear to question what Scripture says of the Ministers of Christ, lest the same perverse spirit lead you on to question its doctrine about Himself and his Father. "Little children, it is the last time; and, as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists . . . They went out from us, but they were not of us."* "Ye shall know them by their fruits."† If any man come to you, bringing any scoff against the power of Christ's Ministers, ask him what he holds concerning the Sacraments, or concerning the Blessed Trinity; look narrowly after his belief as regards the Atonement, or Original Sin. Ascertain whether he holds with the Church's doctrine in these points; see to it whether at very best he does not try to evade the question, has recourse to explanations, or professes to have no opinion at all upon it. Look to these things, that you may see whither you are invited. Be not robbed of your faith blindfold. Do what you do with a clear understanding of the consequences. And if the arguments which he uses against you tend to show that your present set of opinions is in some measure inconsistent, and force you to see in Scripture more than you do at present, or else less, be not afraid to add to it, rather than to detract from it. Be quite sure that, go as far as you may, you will never, through God's grace be led to see more in it than the early Christians saw; that, however you enlarge your creed, you will but carry yourselves on to Apostolic perfection, equally removed from the extremes of presumption and of unbelief, neither intruding into things not seen as yet, nor denying what you cannot see.

* 1 John ii. 18, 19.

† Matt. vii. 16.

SERMON XXVI.

THE FEAST OF ST. JAMES, THE APOSTLE.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

MATT. xx. 23.

To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give ; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

IN these words to which the Festival of St. James the Greater especially directs our minds, our Lord solemnly declares that the high places of His Kingdom are not His to give,—which can mean nothing else, than that the assignment of them does not simply and absolutely depend upon Him ; for that He will actually dispense them at the last day, and moreover is the meritorious cause of any being given, is plain from Scripture. I say, He avers most solemnly that something besides His own will and choice is necessary, for obtaining the posts of honour about His throne ; so that we are naturally led on to ask, *where* it is that this awful prerogative is lodged. Is it with His Father ? He proceeds to speak of His Father ? but neither does He assign it to Him, “It shall be given to them for whom it is *prepared* of My Father.” The Father’s foreknowledge and design are announced, not His choice. “Whom He did foreknow, them He did predestinate.” He prepares the reward, and confers it, but upon whom ? No answer is given us, unless it is conveyed in the words which follow,—upon the humble :—“Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”

Some parallel passages may throw further light upon the question. In the description our Lord gives us of the Last Judgment, He tells us He shall say to them on His right hand, “Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom *prepared* for you from the foundation of the world.” Here we have the same expression ; who then are the heirs for whom the Kingdom is prepared ? He tells us expressly, those who fed the hungry and thirsty, lodged the stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick, came to the prisoners, for His sake. Consider again an

earlier passage in the same chapter. To whom is it that He will say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"—to those whom He can praise as "good and faithful servants," who have been "faithful over a few things." These two passages then carry our search just to the very same point, as that of which the text is a part. They lead us *from* the thought of God and Christ, and throw us upon human agency and responsibility, for the solution of the question; and they finally lodge us there, *unless* indeed other texts of Scripture can be produced to lead us on further still. We know for certain that they for whom the Kingdom is prepared are the humble, the charitable, and the diligent in the improvement of their gifts; to which another text (for instance,) adds the spiritually-minded; "Eye hath not seen the things which God hath *prepared* for them that *love* Him."* Is this as far as we can go? does it now depend ultimately on ourselves, or on any one else, that we come to be humble, charitable, diligent, and lovers of God?

Now, in answering this question religious men have for many centuries differed in opinion; not indeed in the first and purest ages of the Church, but when corruptions began to steal in. In the primitive times it was always considered that, though God's grace was absolutely necessary for us from first to last,—before we believed, in order to our believing, and while we obeyed and worked righteousness, in order to our obeying,—so that not a deed, word or thought could be pleasing to Him without it; yet, that after all the human mind had also from first to last a power of resisting grace, and thus (as the foregoing texts imply) had committed to it the ultimate determination of its own fate, whether to be saved or rejected, the responsibility of its conduct, and, if rejected, the whole blame of it. However, at the beginning of the fifth century, when shadows were coming over the Church, a celebrated Doctor arose, whose name must ever be honoured by us, for his numberless gifts, his diligence, and his extended usefulness, whatever judgment may be passed on certain of his opinions. He is known in the Theological Schools as the first to have given some sort of sanction to two doctrines hitherto unknown in the Church, and apparently far removed from each other, as indeed are the modern Systems in which they are found. The one is the Predestinarian Hypothesis;† viz. that, in

* Matt. xxv. 21. 34—36. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† "When, towards the close of his controversy with the Pelagians, he (Augustine) entered largely and systematically into his own peculiar views of election and predestination, . . . it was, even by those who concurred in the general drift of his previous anti-pelagian treatises . . . objected to him that he was *now* superfluously advancing a scheme of doctrine hitherto unknown and unheard of, a scheme of doctrine contrary to the opinion of all antecedent fathers, and contrary to the sense

spite of the text, it is God and Christ with whom the ultimate decision concerning the individual's state depends; that His grace does not merely suggest, influence, precede, and follow, but forms in the soul a new character, not by the soul's instrumentality, but immediately by Himself, and is effectual with some not with others, at His own will, not at the individual's. The one, I say, is this Predestinarian Doctrine; and the other is the doctrine of Purgatory.* With this latter I am not now concerned; and mention it only as a remarkable fact, that the same Teacher, highly to be venerated except where he deviates from Catholic doctrine, should have first sanctioned certain characteristics of two Systems, which lie on either side, as of the Primitive, so of the present Anglican Church. Dismissing the coincidence with this remark, I proceed to make some brief observations on the ground of argument on which the Predestinarian Doctrine rests.

It is doubtless a great mystery, how it is that one man believes, and another rejects the Gospel. It is altogether a mystery; we cannot get at all beyond the fact, and must be content with our ignorance. But men of reasoning, subtle, and restless minds, have within them a temptation to inquisitiveness; they cannot acquiesce in the limits of God's revelation, and go on to assume a cause for the strange things they see, when they are not told one. Thus they argue that a man's self cannot be the ultimate cause of his faith or unbelief, else there would be more first causes than God in the world: as if the same reasoning would not show that God is the Author of evil; or as if it were more intelligible, why the Divine Will should choose this man and reject that, than why an individual man should choose or reject good or evil. When then they see, as is constantly seen in life, two persons, in education the same,

of the entire Church Catholic. . . . Augustine was charged with *novelty*. . . But how does the great Bishop of Hippo act under the present allegation. . . After much superfluous discussion, and (I fear) with a too evident reluctance to meddle with the appeal to antiquity, [he] claims to produce exactly three witnesses in his favour, Cyprian, to wit, and Ambrose, and Gregory of Nazianzum. . . But in truth, with the scanty exception of nine words written by Ambrose, their several testimonies are altogether nugatory and irrelevant; so that in point of historical evidence, as afforded by those fathers who preceded Augustine, the whole mighty fabric of . . . Austinism, rests upon the single Ambrosian sentence: *Deus, quos dignatur, vocat; et quem vult, religiosum facit.*"—*Faber's Trinitarianism*, vol. i. p. x—xiii.

* Vide Bull, Sermon iii. p. 77. Augustine however did no more than state the doctrine conjecturally. "The first," says Archbishop Usher, "whom we find directly to have held, that 'for certain light faults there is a purgatory fire,' provided before the day of judgment, was Gregory the First, about the end of the sixth age after the birth of our Saviour Christ." *Answer to a Jesuit*, ch. 6. Nay, as Bishop Taylor tells us, even "St. Gregory Pope affirms that which is perfectly inconsistent with the whole doctrine of Purgatory." *Dissuasive*, p. 2. ii. 2.

in circumstances the same, both baptized, both admitted to full Church privileges, one turning out well, the other ill, astonished at the mystery, they hastily say, "Here is God's secret election! God has decreed life to one, and has passed over the other; else why this difference of conduct?" when they should bow the head, and wait till the day of the revelation of all secrets. Again, they assume that the will is subjected to the influence of the reason, affections, and the like, in the same uniform way in which material bodies obey the laws of matter;—that, certain inducements or a certain knowledge being presented, the mind can but act in one way; so that, its movements varying, on a given rule, according to influences from without, (whether from the world or from God,) every one's doom must be determined, either by the mere chance of external circumstances, (which is irrational,) or else, certainly by the determination of God. Such are their reasonings; and it is remarkable that they should trust to reasoning, and in so special a way, considering they are commonly the men who speak against human reason as fallible and corrupt, when it is brought to oppose their opinions. Such grounds of argument, then, we may dismiss at once, except in philosophical discussions; certainly when we speak as Christians.

Next, let us inquire whether there be any Scripture reason, for breaking the chain of doctrine which the text suggests. Christ gives the Kingdom to those for whom it is prepared of the Father; the Father prepares it for those who love and serve Him. Does Scripture warrant us in reversing this order, and considering that any are chosen to love Him by His irreversible decree? The disputants in question maintain that it does.

1. Scripture is supposed expressly to *promise* perseverance, when men once savingly partake of grace; as where it is said, "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;"* and hence it is inferred that the salvation of the individual rests ultimately with God, and not with himself. But here I would object in the outset to applying to individuals, promises and declarations made to bodies, and of a general nature. The question in debate is, not whether God carries forward bodies of men, such as the Christian Church, to salvation, but whether He has accorded any promise of indefectibility to given individuals? Those who differ from us say, that individuals are absolutely chosen to eternal life; let them then reckon up the passages in Scripture where perseverance is promised to individuals. Till they can satisfy this demand, they have done nothing by producing such a text as that just cited; which, being spoken of the

* Phil. i. 6.

body of Christians, does but impart that same kind of encouragement, as is contained in other general declarations, such as the statement about God's willingness to save, His being in the midst of us, and the like.

But let us suppose, for argument's sake, that such passages may be applied to individuals; for instance, as when Christ says, that no one "shall pluck His sheep out of His Father's hand." Now, I would maintain that here a condition is understood, as is constantly the case in Scripture, as in other writings; viz. that, while the sheep "follow" Christ, and keep within the fold, none can pluck them thence. God proclaims His name to Moses, as "forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;"* but what would be thought of a commentator who hence inferred that the impenitent might be forgiven, and the repenting sinner fail of pardon?

Again, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."† What is this but a declaration, that on the whole all our sanctification is from first to last God's work? how does it interfere with this, to say that we may effectually resist that work? Might it not truly be said that the cure of a sick person was wholly attributable to the physician, without denying that the former, had he so chosen, might have obstinately rejected the medicine, or that there might have been (though there was not,) some malignant habit of body, which completely baffled the medical art? Does the chance of failure make it less the physician's work when there is not failure?

In truth, the two doctrines of the sovereign and overruling power of divine grace, and man's power of resistance, need not at all interfere with each other. They lie in different provinces, and are (as it were,) incommensurables. Thus St. Paul evidently accounted them; else he could not have introduced the text in question with the exhortation, "Work out" or accomplish "your own salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is God which worketh" or acts "in you." So far was he from thinking man's distinct working inconsistent with God's continual aiding, that he assigns the knowledge of the latter as an encouragement to the former. Let me challenge then a Predestinarian to paraphrase this text. We, on the contrary, find no insuperable difficulty in it, considering it to enjoin upon us a deep awe and reverence, while we engage in those acts and efforts which are to secure our salvation, from the belief that God is in us and with us, inspecting and succouring our every thought and deed. Would not the Jewish High Priest, on the Great Day of Atonement, when going through his several acts of propitiation

* John x. 28. Exod. xxxiv. 7.

† Phil. ii. 12, 13.

in God's presence, without and within the Veil, "exceedingly fear and quake," lest he should fail in aught put upon him; and shall not we in our more blessed Covenant, knowing that God himself is within us, and in all we do, fear the more from the thought, that after all, we have our own part in the work, and must do it well, if we are to be saved? What, on the other hand, is the meaning of saying with the Predestinarian, "Work anxiously, because, in reality, you have no work to do?"

I say this, not so much by way of argument against him, as to show that a text which might be adduced in his behalf, chances (so to say) to be implicated with an exhortation, such as proves that it, and therefore similar passages, cannot really be explained as he would have it; proves, that his argument from it, "The whole work of salvation is of God, *therefore* man has no real part in securing it," in fact runs contrary to the Apostle's own argument from his own words, "Man must exert himself, *because* God is present with him." It is quite certain that a modern Predestinarian never could have written such a sentence.

Another instructive passage of this kind is our Lord's declaration, with St. John's comment upon it, in the sixth chapter of his Gospel, "There are some of you that believe not. For Jesus *knew from the beginning* who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, *Therefore*, said I unto you, that *no man can come unto Me, unless it were given unto him of My Father.*" Here, in the plain meaning of the words, God's foreknowledge of the issue of free will in individuals is made compatible (though the manner how is not told us,) with electing grace. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate."

Take again another passage. "I obtained mercy, *because* I did it ignorantly;" "I obtained mercy, *that* in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering."* It appears that the Apostle saw no inconsistency in preaching that *no* sinner can *claim* forgiveness, yet that those who are *less guilty* than others *obtain* it. These two doctrines do not seem to have come into collision in his mind, any more than in our own; but it is quite plain that a Predestinarian never would have introduced the second while descanting on the first.

2. In the next place, there are many passages of the following kind, which are sometimes taken to favour the Predestinarian view, and require explanation. "God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of

* John vi. 64, 65. 1 Tim. i. 13. 16.

children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Here certainly an election is spoken of, irrespective of the conduct of the individuals who are subjects of it. Again, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that salvation not of yourselves, it is the gift of God :"* and the like. But in such passages let it be observed, neither heaven, nor the grace of Sanctification is spoken of, but the present privilege, high indeed and peculiar to the Gospel, but only a privilege, of regeneration. This great Christian gift of course includes in it the communication of a sanctifying grace; but such a grace may be, and under circumstances has been, given without it. The Jews were aided by the Spirit of Sanctification, not of Regeneration. They were not the sons of God, as we are; whereas in every age "the just have lived by faith," and the like fruits of Sanctification. Now, where are we told that this Sanctifying Grace is irrespective of the free-will of individuals? for this is the point. On the other hand, we readily grant that the grace of Regeneration is such; we grant that it is all that certain teachers would consider Sanctification to be. It is a definite and complete gift conveyed, not gradually, but at once; or at least it has not more than a second degree, in the rite of Confirmation, wherein what is given in Baptism is sealed and secured; and moreover, it is a *state* distinct from every other, consisting in the Sacred Presence of the Spirit of Christ in soul and body; and lastly, it is bestowed on this man or that, not by any rule which we can discover, but at the inscrutable decree of Him, who calls into His Church whom He will. But faith, together with the other gifts of Sanctification, is not thus bestowed. In its nature it is independent of Regeneration, and, in the formal scheme of the Gospel, it is antecedent to it. It is the antecedent condition for receiving the Ordinances which convey and seal Regeneration,—Baptism and Confirmation. Hence, St. John says, "*As many as received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And St. Paul, "*Believing in Christ, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."†

It avails not, therefore, to enlarge upon the characteristics of the Christian Election, with a view of proving the irreversible decrees of God concerning the *final* salvation of individuals.

3. Lastly, there are passages which speak of God's *judicial* dealings with the heart of man; in which, doubtless, He does act absolutely at

* Eph. i. 3—5. ii. 8.

† John i. 12, 13. Eph. i. 13, 14.

His sole will,—yet not in the beginning of His Providence towards us, but at the close. Thus He is said “to send” on men “strong *delusion* to believe a lie ;” but only on those who “received not the love of the Truth that they might be saved.”* Such irresistible influences do but pre-suppose, instead of superseding, our own accountableness.

These three explanations then being allowed their due weight,—the compatibility of God’s sovereignty over the soul with man’s individual agency, the distinction between Regeneration and faith and obedience, and the judicial purpose of certain divine influences upon the heart,—let us ask, what does there remain of Scripture evidence in behalf of the Predestinarian doctrines ? Are we not obliged to leave the mystery of human agency and responsibility as we find it ?—as truly a mystery in itself as that which concerns the Nature and Attributes of the Divine Mind.

Surely it will be our true happiness thus to conduct ourselves ; to use our reason, in getting at the true sense of Scripture, not in making a series of deductions from it ; in unfolding the doctrines therein contained, not in adding new ones to them ; in acquiescing in what is told, not in indulging curiosity about the “secret things” of the Lord our God.

I conclude with the following text, which, while it is a solemn warning to us all to turn to God with a true heart, states, with a force not to be explained away, that revealed Will with which we are bound to rest satisfied. “*As I live*, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O House of Israel.”†

* 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.

† Ez. xxxiii. 11.

SERMON XXVII.

THE FEAST OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW, THE APOSTLE. GUILLESSNESS.

JOHN i. 47.

JESUS SAW Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW, whose Festival we celebrate to-day, has been supposed to be the same as the Nathanael mentioned in the text. Nathanael was one of Christ's first converts, yet his name does not occur again till the last chapter of St. John's Gospel, where he is mentioned in company with certain of the Apostles, to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection. Now why should the call of Nathanael have been recorded in the opening of the Gospel, among the acts of Christ in the beginning of His Ministry, except he was an Apostle? Philip, Peter, and Andrew, who are mentioned at the same time, were all Apostles; and Nathanael's name is introduced without preface, as if familiar to a Christian reader. At the end of the Gospel it appears again, and there too among Apostles. Besides, the Apostles were the special witnesses of Christ, when He was risen. He manifested Himself, "not to all the people," says St. Peter, "but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead."* Now, the occasion on which Nathanael is mentioned, was one of these manifestations. "This is now the third time," says the Evangelist, "that Jesus was manifested to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead." It was in the presence of Nathanael that He gave St. Peter his commission, and foretold his martyrdom, and the prolonged life of St. John. This leads us to conjecture that Nathanael is one of the Apostles under another name. Now he is not Andrew, Peter, or Philip, for they are mentioned in connection with him in the first chapter of the Gospel; nor Thomas, James, or John, in whose company he is found in the last chapter; nor Jude, (as it would seem,)

* Acts x. 41.

because the name of Jude occurs in St. John's fourteenth chapter. Four Apostles remain, who are not named in his Gospel,—St. James the Less, St. Matthew, St. Simon, and St. Bartholomew; of whom St. Matthew's second name is known to have been Levi, while St. James, being related, was not at any time a stranger to our Lord, which Nathanael evidently was. If then Nathanael were an Apostle, he was either Simon or Bartholomew. Now it is observable that, according to St. John, Philip brought Nathanael to Christ; therefore Nathanael and Philip were friends: while in the other Gospels, in the list of Apostles, Philip is associated with Bartholomew: "Simon and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew."* This is some evidence that Bartholomew and not Simon is the Nathanael of St. John. On the other hand, Matthias has been suggested instead of either, his name meaning nearly the same as Nathanael in the original language. However, since writers of some date decide in favour of Bartholomew, I shall do the like in what follows.

What then do we learn from his recorded character and history? It affords us an instructive lesson.

When Philip told him that he had found the long-expected Messiah, of whom Moses wrote, Nathanael (that is, Bartholomew) at first doubted. He was well read in the Scriptures, and knew the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem; whereas Jesus dwelt at Nazareth, which Nathanael supposed in consequence to be the place of His birth,—and he knew of no particular promises attached to that city, which was a place of evil report, and he thought no good could come out of it. Philip told him to come and see; and he went to see, as a humble single-minded man, sincerely desirous to get at the truth. In consequence, he was vouchsafed an interview with our Saviour, and was converted.

Now, from what occurred in this interview, we gain some insight into St. Bartholomew's character. Our Lord said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;" and it appears, moreover, as if, before Philip called him to come to Christ, he was engaged in meditation or prayer, in the privacy which a fig-tree's shade afforded him. And this, it seems, was the life of one who was destined to act the busy part of an Apostle; quietness without, guilelessness within. This was the tranquil preparation for great dangers and sufferings! We see who make the most heroic Christians, and are the most honoured by Christ!

An even unvaried life is the lot of most men, in spite of occasional

* Matt. x. 3.

troubles or other accidents; and we are apt to despise it, and to get tired of it, and to long to see the world,—or, at all events, we think such a life affords no great opportunity for religious obedience. To rise up, and go through the same duties, and then to rest again, day after day,—to pass week after week, beginning with God's service on Sunday, and then to our worldly tasks,—so to continue till year follows year, and we gradually get old,—an unvaried life like this is apt to seem unprofitable to us when we dwell upon the thought of it. Many indeed there are, who do not think at all; but live in this round of employments, without care about God and religion, driven on by the natural course of things in a dull irrational way like the beasts that perish. But when a man begins to feel he has a soul, and a work to do, and a reward to be gained, greater or less, according as he improves the talents committed to him, then he is naturally tempted to be anxious from his very wish to be saved, and he says: "What must I *do* to please God?" And sometimes he is led to think he ought to be useful on a large scale, and goes out of his line of life, that he may be doing something worth doing, as he considers it. Here we have the history of St. Bartholomew and the other Apostles to recall us to ourselves, and to assure us that we need not give up our usual manner of life, in order to serve God, that the most humble and quietest station is acceptable to Him, if improved duly, nay, affords means for maturing the highest Christian character, even that of an Apostle. Bartholomew read the Scriptures and prayed to God; and thus was trained at length to give up his life for Christ, when He demanded it.

But further, let us consider the particular praise which our Saviour gives him. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." This is just the character which (through God's grace) they may attain most fully, who live out of the world in the private way I have been describing,—which is made least account of by man, and thought to be in the way of success in life, though our Saviour chose it to make head against all the power and wisdom of the world. Men of the world think an ignorance of its ways is a disadvantage or disgrace; as if it were somehow unmanly and weak to have abstained from all acquaintance with its impieties and lax practices. How often do we hear them say that a man must do so and so, unless he would be singular and absurd; that he must not be too strict, or indulge high-flown notions of virtue, which may be good to talk about, but are not fit for this world! When they hear of any young person resolving on being consistently religious, or being strictly honest in trade, or observing a noble purity in language and demeanour, they smile and think it very well, but that it will and must wear off in time. And they are ashamed of

being innocent, and pretend to be worse than they really are. Then they have all sorts of little ways—are mean, jealous, suspicious, censorious, cunning, insincere, selfish; and think others as low-minded as themselves, only proud, or in some sense hypocritical, unwilling to confess their real motives and feelings.

To this base and irreligious multitude is opposed the Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. David describes his character in the fifteenth Psalm; and, taken in all its parts, it is a rare one. He asks, "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not."

I say, it is a difficult and rare virtue, to mean what we say, to love without dissimulation, to think no evil, to bear no grudge, to be free from selfishness, to be innocent and straight-forward. This character of mind is something far above the generality of men; and, when realized in due measure, one of the surest marks of Christ's elect. And the instances which we may every now and then discover of it among Christians, will be an evidence to us, if evidence be wanting, that, in spite of all that grovelling minds may say about the necessity of acquaintance with the world and with sin, in order to get on well in life, yet after all, inexperienced guilelessness carries a man on as safely and more happily. For, first, it is in itself a great privilege to a rightly disposed mind, not to be sensible of the moral miseries of the world; and this is eminently the lot of the simple-hearted. They take every thing in good part which happens to them, and make the best of every one; thus they have always something to be pleased with, not seeing the bad, and keenly sensible of the good. And communicating their own happy peace to those around them, they really diminish the evils of life in society at large, while they escape from the knowledge of them themselves. Such men are cheerful and contented; for they desire but little, and take pleasure in the least matters, having no wish for riches and distinction. And they are under the tyranny of no evil or base thoughts, having never encouraged what in the case of other men often spreads disorder and unholiness through their whole future life. They have no phantoms of former sins, such as remain even to the penitent, when he has subdued their realities, rising up in their minds, harassing them, for a time domineering, and leaving a sting behind them.

Guileless persons are, most of all men, skilful in shaming and silencing the wicked ;—for they do not argue, but take things for granted in so natural a way, that they throw back the sinner upon the recollection of those times of his youth, when he was pure from sin, and thought as they do now ; and none but very hardened men can resist this sort of appeal. Men of irreligious lives live in bondage and fear ; even though they do not acknowledge it to themselves. Many a one, who would be ashamed to own it, is afraid of certain places or times, or of solitude, from a sort of instinct that he is no company for good spirits, and that devils may then assail him. But the guileless man has a simple boldness and a princely heart ; he overcomes dangers which others shrink from, merely because they are no dangers to him, and thus he often gains even worldly advantages, by his straight-forwardness, which the most crafty persons cannot gain, though they risk their souls for them. It is true such single-hearted men often get into difficulties, but they usually get out of them as easily ; and are almost unconscious both of their danger and their escape. Perhaps they have not received a learned education, and cannot talk fluently ; yet they are ever a match for those who try to shake their faith in Christ by profane argument or ridicule, for the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Nor is it only among the poor and lowly that this blessed character of mind is found to exist. Secular learning and dignity have doubtless in their respective ways a powerful tendency to rob the heart of its brightness and purity ; yet even in kings' courts, and the schools of philosophy, Nathanaels may be discovered. Nay, like the Apostle, they have been subjected to the world's buffetings, they have been thwarted in their day, lived in anxiety, and seemingly lost by their honesty, yet without being foiled either of its present comfort or its ultimate fruit. Such was our great Archbishop and Martyr, to whom perchance we owe it, that we who now live are still members of a branch of the Church Catholic ; one of whose "greatest unpopular infirmities," according to the historian of his times, was "that he believed innocence of heart, and integrity of manners, was a guard strong enough to secure any man in his voyage through this world, in what company soever he travelled, and through what ways soever he was to pass. And sure, (he adds,) never any man was better supplied with that provision."

I have in these remarks spoken of guileless men as members of society, because I wished to show, that, even in that respect in which they seem deficient, they possess a hidden strength, an unconscious wisdom, which makes them live above the world, and sooner or later triumph over it. The weapons of their warfare are not carnal ; and they are fitted to be Apostles, though they seem to be ordinary men.

Such is the blessedness of the innocent, that is, of those who have never given way to evil, or formed themselves to habits of sin ; who in consequence literally do not know its power or its misery, who have thoughts of truth and peace ever before them, and are able to discern at once the right and wrong in conduct, as by some delicate instrument, which tells truly because it has never been ill-treated. Nay, such may be the portion (through God's mercy) even of those who have at one time departed from Him, and then repented ; in proportion as they have learned to love God, and have purified themselves, not only from sin, but from the recollections of it.

Lastly, more is requisite for the Christian, even than guilelessness such as Bartholomew's. When Christ sent forth him and his brethren into the world, He said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves ; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Innocence must be joined to prudence, discretion, self-command, gravity, patience, perseverance in well-doing, as Bartholomew doubtless learned in due season under his Lord's teaching ; but innocence is the beginning. Let us then pray God to fulfil in us "all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power ;" that if it should please Him suddenly to bring us forward to great trials, as He did His Apostles, we may not be taken by surprise, but be found to have made a private or domestic life a preparation for the achievements of Confessors and Martyrs.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE FEAST OF ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE.

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

LUKE VI. 24.

Wo unto you that are rich ! for ye have received your consolation.

UNLESS we were accustomed to read the New Testament from our childhood, I think we should be very much struck with the warnings which it contains, not only against the love of riches, but the very possession of them ; we should wonder with a portion of that astonishment

which the Apostles at first felt, who had been brought up in the notion that they were a chief reward which God bestowed on those He loved. As it is, we have heard the most solemn declarations so continually, that we have ceased to attach any distinct meaning to them; or, if our attention is at any time drawn more closely to them, we soon dismiss the subject on some vague imagination, that what is said in Scripture had a reference to the particular times when Christ came, without attempting to settle its exact application to us, or whether it has any such application at all,—as if the circumstance that the interpretation requires care and thought, were an excuse for giving no thought nor care whatever to the settling of it.

But, even if we had ever so little concern in the Scripture denunciations against riches and the love of riches, the very awfulness of them might have seemed enough to save them from neglect; just as the flood, and the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, are still dwelt upon by Christians with solemn attention, though we have a promise against the recurrence of the one, and trust we shall never be so deserted by God's grace as to call down upon us the other. And this consideration may lead a man to suspect that the neglect in question does not entirely arise from unconcern, but from a sort of misgiving that the subject of riches is one which cannot be safely or comfortably discussed by the Christian world at this day; that is, which cannot be discussed without placing the claims of God's Law and the pride of life into visible and perplexing opposition.

Let us then see what the letter of Scripture says on the subject. For instance, consider the text. "Wo unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation!" The words are sufficiently clear, (it will not be denied,) as spoken of rich persons in our Saviour's day. Let the full force of the word "consolation," be observed. It is used by way of contrast to the comfort which is promised to the Christian in the list of Beatitudes.* Comfort, in all the fulness of that word, as including help, guidance, encouragement, and support, is the peculiar promise of the Gospel. The Promised Spirit who has taken Christ's place, was called by Him "the Comforter." There is then something very fearful in the intimation of the text, that those who have riches thereby receive their portion, such as it is, in full, instead of the Heavenly Gift of the Gospel. The same doctrine is implied in our Lord's words in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. "Son, remember thou in thy lifetime receivedst *thy* good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but *now* he is *comforted*, and thou art tormented." At another time He said to His

* Matt. v. 4.

Disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! for it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*

Now it is usual to dismiss such passages with the remark that they are directed, not against those who have, but against those who trust in riches; as if forsooth they implied no *connection* between the having and the trusting, no warning *lest* the possession led to the idolatrous reliance on them, no necessity of fear and anxiety in the possessors, lest they should become castaways. And this irrelevant distinction is supposed to find countenance in our Lord's own language on one of the occasions above referred to, in which He first says, "How hardly shall they that *have* riches," then, "How hard is it for them that *trust* in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God;" whereas surely, He only removes His disciples' false impression, that the bare circumstance of possessing wealth was inconsistent with a state of salvation, and no more interprets *having* by *trusting*, than makes *trusting* essential to *having*. He connects the two, without identifying, without explaining away; and the simple question which lies for our determination, is this:—whether, considering that they who had riches when Christ came, were likely in His judgment idolatrously to trust in them, there is, or is not, reason for thinking that this likelihood varies materially in different ages; and, according to the solution of this question, must we determine the application of the words pronounced in the text to these times. And, at all events, let it be observed, it is for those who would make out that these passages do *not* apply now, to give their reasons for their opinion; the burden of proof is with them. Till they draw their clear and reasonable distinctions between the first and the nineteenth century, the denunciation hangs over the world that is, as much as over the Pharisees and Sadducees at our Lord's coming.

But, in truth, that our Lord meant to speak of riches as being in some sense a calamity to the Christian, is plain, not only from such texts as the foregoing, but from His praises and recommendation on the other hand of poverty. For instance, "Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old." "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." "Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours . . . but . . . call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." And in like manner, St. James: "Hath not God chosen the poor of

* Luke xvi. 25. xviii. 24, 25.

this world, rich in faith, and heirs of that kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?"* Now I cite these texts in the way of doctrine, not of precept. Whatever be the line of conduct they prescribe to this or that individual (with which I have nothing to do at present,) so far seems clear, that according to the rule of the Gospel, the absence of wealth, is, as such, a more blessed and a more Christian state than the possession of it.

The most obvious danger which worldly possessions present to our spiritual welfare is, that they become practically a substitute in our hearts for that One Object to which our supreme devotion is due. They are present; God is unseen. They are means at hand of effecting what we want; whether God will hear our petitions for such things, is uncertain; or rather, I may say, certain in the negative. Thus they minister to the corrupt inclinations of our nature; they promise and are able to be gods to us, and such gods too as require no service, but, like dumb idols, exalt the worshipper, impressing him with a notion of his own power and security. And in this consist their chief and most subtle mischief. Religious men are able to repress, nay extirpate sinful desires, the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, gluttony, drunkenness, and the like, love of amusements and frivolous pleasures and display, indulgence in luxuries of whatever kind; but as to wealth, they cannot easily rid themselves of a secret feeling that it gives them a footing to stand upon, an importance, a superiority; and in consequence they get attached to this world, lose sight of the duty of bearing the Cross, become dull and dim-sighted, and lose their delicacy and precision of touch, are numbed (so to say) in their fingers'-ends, as regards religious interests and prospects. To risk all upon Christ's word seems somehow unnatural to them, extravagant, and evidences a morbid excitement; and death, instead of being a gracious, however awful release, is not a welcome subject of thought. They are content to remain as they are, and do not contemplate a change. They desire and mean to serve God, nay actually do serve Him in their measure; but not with the keen sensibilities, the noble enthusiasm, the grandeur and elevation of soul, the dutifulness and affectionateness towards Christ which becomes a Christian, but as Jews might obey, who had no Image of God given them except this created world, "eating their bread with joy, and drinking their wine with a merry heart," caring that "their garments be always white, and their head lacking no ointment, living joyfully with the wife whom they love all the days of the life of their vanity," and "enjoying the good of their labour."† Not of course,

* Luke xii. 33. Matt. xix. 21. Luke vi. 20. xiv. 12, 13. James ii. 5.

† Eccles. ix. 7—9. v. 18.

that the due use of God's temporal blessings is wrong, but to make them the object of our affections, to allow them to beguile us from the "One Husband" to whom we are espoused, is to mistake the Gospel for Judaism.

This then, if we may venture to say so, was some part of our Saviour's meaning, when He connects together the having with the trusting in riches ; and it is especially suitable to consider it upon this day, when we commemorate an Apostle and Evangelist, whose history is an example and encouragement for all those who have, and fear lest they should trust. But St. Matthew was exposed to an additional temptation, which I shall proceed to consider ; for he not only possessed, but he was engaged also in the pursuit of wealth. Our Saviour seems to warn us against this further danger in His description of the thorns, in the parable of the Sower, as being "the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches ;" and more clearly in the parable of the Great Supper, where the guests excuse themselves, one, as having "bought a piece of ground," another "five yoke of oxen." Still more openly does St. Paul speak in his first Epistle to Timothy ; "They that desire to be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil ; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*

The danger of *possessing* riches is the carnal security to which they lead ; that of "*desiring*" and *pursuing* them, is, that an object of this world is thus set before us as the aim and end of life. It seems to be the will of Christ that His followers should have no aim or end, pursuit or business merely of this world. Here, again, I speak as before, not in the way of precept, but of doctrine. I am looking at His holy religion as at a distance, and determining what is its general character and spirit, not what may happen to be the duty of this or that individual who has embraced it. It is His will that all we do should be done, not unto men, or to the world, or to self, but to His glory ; and the more we are enabled to do this simply, the more favoured we are. Whenever we act with reference to an object of this world, even though it be ever so pure, we are exposed to the temptation, (not irresistible, God forbid !) still to the temptation of setting our hearts upon obtaining it. And therefore, we call all such objects *excitements*, as stimulating us incongruously, casting us out of the serenity and stability of heavenly faith, attracting us aside by their proximity from our harmonious

* Matt. xiii. 22. Luke xiv. 18, 19. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

round of duties, and making our thoughts converge to something short of that which is infinitely High and eternal. Such excitements are of perpetual occurrence, and the mere undergoing them, so far from involving guilt in the act itself or its results, is the great business of life and the discipline of our hearts. It is often a sin to withdraw from them, as has been the case of some perhaps who have gone into Monasteries to serve God more entirely. On the other hand, it is the very duty of the Spiritual Ruler to labour for the flock committed to him, to suffer and to dare; St. Paul was encompassed with excitements hence arising, and his writings show the agitating effect of them on his mind. He was like David, a man of war and blood; and that, for our sakes. Still it holds good that the essential spirit of the Gospel is "quietness and confidence;" that the possession of these is the highest gift, and to gain them perfectly our main aim. Consequently, however much a duty it is to undergo excitements when they are sent upon us, it is plainly unchristian, a manifest foolishness and sin, to seek out any such, whether secular or religious. Hence gaming is so great an offence; as being a presumptuous creation on our part of a serious, if not an overpowering temptation to fix the heart upon an object of this world. Hence, the mischief of many amusements of (what is called) the fashion of the day; which are devised for the very purpose of taking up the thoughts, and making time pass easy. Quite contrary is the Christian temper, which is in its perfect and peculiar enjoyment when engaged in that ordinary, unvaried course of duties which God assigns, and which the world calls dull and tiresome. To get up day after day to the same employments, and to feel happy in them, is the great lesson of the Gospel; and, when exemplified in those who are alive to the temptation of being busy, it implies a heart weaned from the love of this world. True it is, that illness of body, as well as restlessness of mind, may occasionally render such a life a burden; it is true also, that indolence, self-indulgence, timidity, and other similar bad habits, may indulge in it by preference, as a pretext for neglecting more active duties. Men of energetic minds and talents for action are called to a life of trouble; they are the compensations and antagonists of the world's evils; still let them never forget their place; they are men of war, and we war that we may obtain peace. They are but men of war, honoured indeed by God's choice, and in spite of all momentary excitements, resting in the depth of their hearts upon the One True Vision of Christian faith; still after all they are but soldiers in the open field, not builders of the Temple, nor inhabitants of those "amiable" and specially blessed "Tabernacles" where the worshipper lives in praise and intercession, and is militant amid

the unostentatious duties of ordinary life. "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."* Such is our Lord's judgment, showing that our true happiness consists in being at leisure to serve God without excitements. For this gift we especially pray in one of our Collects: "Grant, O Lord, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness."† Persecution, civil changes, and the like, break in upon the Church's calm. The greatest privilege of a Christian is to have nothing to do with worldly politics,—to be governed and to submit obediently; and, though here again, selfishness may creep in, and lead a man to neglect public concerns in which he is called to take his share, yet, after all, such participation must be regarded as a duty, scarcely as a privilege, as the fulfilment of trusts committed to him for the good of others, not as the enjoyment of rights, (as men talk in these days of delusion,) not as if political power were in itself a good.

To return to the subject immediately before us I say then, that it is a part of Christian caution to see that our engagements do not become pursuits. Engagements are our portion, but pursuits are for the most part of our own choosing. We may be engaged in worldly business, without pursuing worldly objects; "not slothful in business," yet "serving the Lord." In this then consists the danger of the pursuit of gain, as by trade and the like. It is the most common and widely extended of all excitements. It is one in which every one almost may indulge, nay, and will be praised by the world for indulging. And it lasts through life; in that differing from the amusements and pleasures of the world, which are short-lived, and succeed one after another. Dissipation of mind, which these amusements create, is itself indeed, miserable enough; but far worse than this dissipation is the concentration of mind upon some worldly object, which admits of being constantly pursued,—and such is the pursuit of gain. Nor is it a slight aggravation of the evil, that anxiety is almost sure to attend it. A life of money-getting is a life of care; from the first there is a fearful anticipation of loss in various ways to depress and unsettle the mind, nay to haunt it, till a man finds he can think about nothing else, and is unable to give his mind to religion from the constant whirl of business in which he is involved. It is well this should be understood. You may hear men talk as if the pursuit of wealth was the business of life. They will argue that by the law of nature a man is bound to gain a livelihood for

* Luke x. 41, 42.

† Vide 1 Tim. ii. 2.

his family, and that he finds a reward in doing so, an innocent and honourable satisfaction, as he adds one sum to another, and counts up his gains. And perhaps they go on to argue, that it is the very duty of man since Adam's fall, "in the sweat of his face," by effort and anxiety, "to eat bread." How strange it is that they do not remember Christ's gracious promise, repealing that original curse, and obviating the necessity of any real pursuit after "the meat that perisheth!" In order that we might be delivered from the bondage of corruption, He has expressly told us that the necessities of life shall never fail his faithful follower, any more than the meal and oil the widow-woman of Sarepta; that, while he is bound to labour for his family, he need not be engrossed by his toil,—that while he is busy, his heart may be at leisure for his Lord. "Be not anxious, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Here is revealed to us at once our privilege and our duty, the Christian portion of having engagements of this world without pursuing objects. And in accordance with our Divine Teacher are the words of the Apostle, introductory of a passage already cited. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."* There is no excuse then for that absorbing pursuit of wealth, which many men indulge in, as if a virtue, and expatiate upon as if a science. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek!" Consider how different is the rule of life left us by the Apostles. "I speak this for your own profit," says St. Paul, "that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction." "This I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as though they possessed not, and they that use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." "Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God." And St. Peter, "Casting all your anxiety upon Him, for He careth for you."†

I have now given the main reason, why the pursuit of gain, whether in a large or small way, is prejudicial to our spiritual interests, that it

* Matt. vi. 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8.

† 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. 35. Phil. iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 7.

fixes the mind upon an object of this world ; yet others remain behind. Money is a sort of creation, and gives the acquirer, even more than the possessor, an imagination of his own power ; and tends to make him idolize self. Again, what we have hardly won, we are unwilling to part with ; so that a man who has himself made his wealth, will commonly be penurious, or at least will not part with it except in exchange for what will reflect credit upon himself, or increase his importance. Even when his conduct is most disinterested and amiable, (as in spending for the comfort of those who depend on him,) still this indulgence of self, of pride and worldliness insinuates itself. Very unlikely therefore is it that he should be liberal towards God ; for religious offerings are an expenditure without sensible return, and that upon objects for which the very pursuit of wealth has indisposed his mind. Moreover, it may be added, there is a considerable tendency in occupations connected with gain to make a man unfair in his dealings, that is, in a subtle way. There are so many conventional deceits and prevarications in the details of the world's business, so much intricacy in the management of accounts, so many perplexed questions about justice and equity, so many plausible subterfuges and fictions of law, so much confusion between the distinct yet approximating outlines of honesty and civil enactment, that it requires a very straightforward mind to keep firm hold of strict conscientiousness, honour, and truth, and to look at matters in which he is engaged, as he would have looked on them, supposing he now came upon them all at once as a stranger.

And if such be the effect of the pursuit of gain on an individual, doubtless it will be the same on a nation ; and if the peril be so great in the one case, why should it be less in the other ? Rather considering that the tendencies of things are sure to be brought out, where time and numbers allow them fair course, is it not certain that any multitude, any society of men, whose object is gain, will on the whole be actuated by those feelings, and moulded into that character, which has been above described ? With this thought before us, it is a very fearful consideration that we belong to a nation which in good measure subsists by making money. I will not pursue it ; nor inquire whether the especial political evils of the day have not their root in that principle, which St. Paul calls the root of all evil, the love of money. Only let us consider the fact, that we *are* money-making people, with our Saviour's declarations before us against wealth, and trust in wealth ; and we shall have abundant matter for serious thought.

Lastly, with this dreary view before us of our condition and prospects as a nation, the pattern of St. Matthew is our consolation ; for it suggests that we, Christ's ministers, may use great freedom of speech, and

state unreservedly the peril of wealth and gain, without aught of harshness or uncharitableness towards individuals who are exposed to it. They may be brethren of the Evangelist, who left all for Christ's sake. Nay such there have been (blessed be God !) in every age ; and in proportion to the strength of the temptation which surrounds them, is their blessedness and their praise, if they are enabled amid the "wares of the seas" and the "great wisdom of their traffic" to hear Christ's voice, to take up their Cross, and follow Him.

SERMON XXIX.

THE FEAST OF ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

THE POWERS OF NATURE.

PSALM CIV. 4.

Who maketh His Angels spirits, His Ministers a flaming fire.

ON to-day's Festival it well becomes us to direct our minds to the thought of those Blessed Servants of God, who have never tasted of sin ; who are among us, though unseen, ever serving God joyfully on earth as well as in heaven ; who minister, through their Maker's condescending will, to the redeemed in Christ, the heirs of salvation.

There have been ages of the world, in which men have thought too much of Angels, and paid them excessive honour ; honoured them so perversely as to forget the supreme worship due to Almighty God. This is the sin of a dark age. But the sin of what is called an educated age, such as our own, is just the reverse ; to account slightly of them, or not at all, to ascribe all we see around us, not to their agency, but to certain assumed laws of nature. This, I say, is likely to be our sin, in proportion as we are initiated into the learning of this world ;—and this is the danger of many (so called) philosophical pursuits, now in fashion, and recommended zealously to the notice of large portions of the community, hitherto strangers to them,—chemistry, geology, and the like ; the danger, that is, of resting in things seen, and forgetting unseen things and our ignorance about them.

I will attempt to say what I mean more at length. The text informs us that Almighty God makes His Angels spirits or winds, and His Ministers a flame of fire. Let us consider what is implied in this.

1. What a number of beautiful and wonderful objects does Nature present on every side of us ! and how little we know concerning them ! In some indeed we see symptoms of intelligence, and we get to form some idea of what they are. For instance, about brute animals we know little, but still we see they have sense, and we understand that their bodily form which meets the eye is but the index, the outside token of something we do not see. Much more in the case of men ; we see them move, speak, and act, and we know that all we see takes place in consequence of their will, because they have a spirit within them, though we do not see it. But why do rivers flow ? Why does rain fall ? Why does the sun warm us ? And the wind, why does it blow ? Here our natural reason is at fault ; we know, I say, that it is the *spirit* in man and in beast that makes man and beast move, but reason tells us of no spirit abiding in what is commonly called the natural world, to make it perform its ordinary duties. Of course, it is *God's* will which *sustains* it all ; so does God's will enable *us* to move also, yet this does not hinder, but, in one sense, we may be truly said to move ourselves ; but how do the wind and water, earth and fire move ? Now here Scripture interposes, and seems to tell us, that all this wonderful harmony is the work of Angels. Those events which we ascribe to chance as the weather, or to nature as the seasons, are duties done to that God who maketh His Angels to be winds, and His Ministers a flame of fire. For example, it was an Angel which gave to the pool at Bethesda its medicinal quality ; and there is no reason why we should doubt that other health-springs in this and other countries are made such by a like unseen ministry. The fires on Mount Sinai, the thunders and lightnings, were the work of Angels ; and in the Apocalypse we read of the Angels restraining the four winds. Works of vengeance are likewise attributed to them. The fiery lava of the volcanoes, which (as it appears) was the cause of Sodom and Gomorrah's ruin, was caused by the two angels who rescued Lot. The hosts of Sennacherib were destroyed by an Angel, by means (it is supposed) of a suffocating wind. The pestilence in Israel when David numbered the people, was the work of an Angel. The earthquake at the resurrection was the work of an Angel. And in the Apocalypse the earth is smitten in various ways by Angels vengeance.*

* John v. 4. Exod. xix. 16—18. Gal. iii. 19. Acts vii. 53. Rev. vii. 1. Gen. xix. 13. 2 Kings xix. 35. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15—17. Matt. xxviii. 2. Rev. viii. ix. xvi.

Thus, as far as the Scripture communications go, we learn that the course of Nature which is so wonderful, so beautiful, and so fearful, is effected by the ministry of these unseen beings. Nature is not inanimate; its daily toil is intelligent; its works are *duties*. Accordingly, the Psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work." "O Lord, Thy word endureth for ever in heaven. Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another; Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to Thine ordinance, for *all things serve Thee*."*

I do not pretend to say, that we are told in Scripture what matter is; but I affirm, that as our souls move our bodies, be our bodies what they may, so there are Spiritual intelligences which move those wonderful and vast portions of the natural world, which seem to be inanimate; and, as the gestures, speech, and expressive countenance of our friends around us enable us to hold intercourse with them, so in the motions of universal Nature, in the interchange of day and night, summer and winter, wind and storm, fulfilling His word, we are reminded of the blessed and dutiful Angels. Well then, on this day's Festival, may we sing the hymn of those Three Holy Children whom Nebuchadnezzar cast into the fiery furnace. The Angels were bid change the nature of the flame, and make it harmless to them; and they in turn called on all the creatures of God, on the Angels especially, to glorify Him. Though many hundreds of years have passed since that time, and the world now vainly thinks it knows more than it did, and that it has found the real causes of the things it sees, still may we say with grateful and simple hearts, "O all ye works of the Lord, O ye Angels of the Lord, O ye sun and moon, stars of heaven, showers and dew, winds of God, light and darkness, mountains and hills, green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord, praise Him, and magnify Him forever." Thus whenever we look abroad, we are reminded of those most gracious and holy Beings, the servants of the Holiest, who deign to minister to the heirs of salvation. Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those, whose faces see God in heaven. And I put it to any one, whether it is not as philosophical, and as full of intellectual enjoyment, to refer the movements of the natural world to them, as to attempt to explain them by certain theories of science; useful as these theories certainly are for particular purposes,

* Psa. xix. 1; cxix. 89—91.

and capable (in subordination to that higher view) of a religious application.

2. And thus I am led to another use of the doctrine under consideration. While it raises the mind, and gives it matter of thought it is also profitable as a humbling doctrine, as indeed I have already shown. Vain man would be wise, and he curiously examines the works of Nature, as if they were lifeless and senseless; as if he alone had intelligence, and they were base inert matter, however curiously contrived at the first. So he goes on, tracing the order of things, seeking for Causes in that order, giving names to the wonders he meets with, and thinking he understands what he has given a name to. At length he forms a theory, and recommends it in writing, and calls himself a philosopher. Now all these theories of science, which I speak of, are useful, as classifying, and so assisting us to *recollect*, the works and ways of God and of His ministering Angels. And again, they are ever most useful, in enabling us to *apply* the course of His providence, and the ordinances of His will to the benefit of man. Thus we are enabled to enjoy God's gifts; and let us thank Him for the knowledge which enables us to do so, and honour those who are His instruments in communicating it. But if such a one proceeds to imagine that, because he knows something of this world's wonderful order, he therefore knows *how* things really go on, if he treats the miracles of Nature (so to call them) as mere mechanical processes, continuing their course by themselves,—as works of man's contriving (a clock, for instance,) are set in motion, and go on, as it were, of themselves,—if in consequence he is, what may be called, irreverent in his conduct towards Nature, thinking (if I may so speak) that it does not hear him, and see how he is bearing himself towards it; and, if moreover he conceives that the Order of Nature, which he partially discerns, will stand in the place of the God who made it, and that all things continue and move on, not by His will and power, and the agency of the thousands and ten thousands of His unseen Servants, but by fixed laws, self-caused and self-sustained, what a poor weak worm, and miserable sinner he becomes! Yet such, I fear, is the condition of many men now-a-days, who talk loudly, and appear to themselves and others to be oracles of science, and as far as the detail of facts goes, do know much more about the operations of Nature than any of us.

Now let us consider what the real state of the case is. Supposing the inquirer I have been describing, when examining a flower, or a herb, or a pebble, or a ray of light, which he treats as something so beneath him in the scale of existence, suddenly discovered that he was in the presence of some powerful being who was hidden behind the visible

things he was inspecting, who, though concealing his wise hand, was giving them their beauty, grace, and perfection, as being God's instrument for the purpose, nay, whose robe and ornaments those wondrous objects were, which he was so eager to analyze, what would be his thoughts? Should we but accidentally show a rudeness of manner towards our fellow man, tread on the hem of his garment, or brush roughly against him, are we not vexed, not as if we had hurt him, but from the fear we may have been disrespectful? David had watched the awful pestilence three days, not with curious eyes, but doubtless with an indescribable terror and remorse; but, when at length he "lifted up his eyes and saw the *Angel* of the Lord," (who caused the pestilence) "stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem, *then* David and the elders, who were clothed in sackcloth, *fell* upon their faces."* The mysterious irresistible pestilence became still more fearful when the cause was known;—and what is true of the painful, is true on the other hand of the pleasant and attractive operations of Nature. When then we walk abroad, and "meditate in the field at the eventide," how much has every herb and flower in it to surprise and overwhelm us! For, even did we know as much about them as the wisest of men, yet there are those around us, though unseen, to whom our greatest knowledge is as ignorance; and, when we converse on subjects of Nature scientifically, repeating the names of plants and earths, and describing their properties, we should do so religiously, as in the hearing of the great Servants of God, with the sort of diffidence which we always feel when speaking before the learned and wise of our own mortal race, as poor beginners in intellectual knowledge, as well as in moral attainments.

Now I can conceive persons saying all this is fanciful; but if it appears so, it is only because we are not accustomed to such thoughts. Surely we are not told in Scripture about the Angels for nothing, but for practical purposes; nor can I conceive a use of our knowledge more practical than to make it connect the sight of this world with the thought of another. Nor one more consolatory; for surely it is a great comfort to reflect that, wherever we go, we have those about us, who are ministering to all the heirs of salvation, though we see them not. Nor one more easily to be understood and felt by all men; for we know that at one time the doctrine of Angels was received even too readily. And if any one would argue hence against it as dangerous, let him recollect the great principle of our Church, that the abuse of a thing does not supersede the use of it; and let him explain, if he

* 1 Chron. xxi. 16.

can, St. Paul's exhorting Timothy not only as "before God and Christ," but before "the elect Angels" also. Hence, in the Communion Service our Church teaches us to join our praises with that of "Angels and Archangels, and all the Company of heaven;" and the early Christians even hoped that they waited on the Church's seasons of worship, and glorified God with her. Nor are these thoughts without their direct influence on our faith in God and His Son; for the more we can enlarge our view of the next world, the better. When we survey Almighty God surrounded by His Holy Angels, His thousand thousands of ministering Spirits, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him, the idea of his awful Majesty rises before us more powerfully and impressively. We begin to see how little we are, how altogether mean and worthless in ourselves, and how high He is, and fearful. The very lowest of His Angels is indefinitely above us in this our present state; how high then must be the Lord of Angels! The very Seraphim hide their faces before His glory, while they praise Him; how shame-faced then should sinners be, when they come into His presence!

Lastly, it is a motive to our exertions in doing the will of God, to think that, if we attain to heaven, we shall become the fellows of the blessed Angels. Indeed what do we know of the courts of heaven, but as peopled by them? and therefore doubtless they are revealed to us, that we may have something to fix our thoughts on, when we look heavenwards. Heaven indeed is the palace of Almighty God, and of Him doubtless we must think in the first place; and again of His Son our Saviour, who died for us, and who is manifested in the Gospels, in order that we may have something definite to look forward to; for the same cause, surely, the Angels also are revealed to us, that heaven may be as little as possible an unknown place in our imaginations.

Let us then entertain such thoughts as these of the Angels of God; and while we try to think of them worthily, let us beware lest we make the contemplation of them a mere feeling, and a sort of luxury of the imagination. This world is to be a world of practice and labour; God reveals to us glimpses of the Third Heaven for our comfort; but if we indulge in these as the end of our present being, not trying day by day to purify ourselves for the future enjoyment of the realities, they become but a snare of our enemy. The Services of religion, day by day, obedience to God in our calling and in ordinary matters, endeavours to imitate our Saviour Christ in word and deed, constant prayer to Him, and dependence on Him, these are the due preparation for receiving and profiting by His revelations; whereas many a man can write and talk beautifully about them, who is not at all better or nearer heaven for all his excellent words.

SERMON XXX.

THE FEAST OF ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST. THE DANGER OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

EXODUS xxxi. 6.

In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted, I have put wisdom.

ST. LUKE differed from his fellow-evangelists and disciples in having received the advantages of (what is called) a liberal education. In this respect he resembled St. Paul, who, with equal accomplishments, appears to have possessed even more learning. St. Luke is said to have been a native of Antioch, a city celebrated for the refined habits and cultivated intellect of its inhabitants; and his profession was that of a physician or surgeon, which of itself evidences him to have been in education something above the generality of men. This is confirmed by the character of his writings, which are superior in composition to any part of the New Testament, excepting some of St. Paul's Epistles.

There are persons who doubt whether what are called "accomplishments," whether in literature or the fine arts, can be consistent with deep and practical seriousness of mind. They think that attention to these argues a lightness of mind, and at least takes up time which might be better employed; and, I confess, at first sight they seem to be able to say much in defence of their opinion. Yet, notwithstanding, St. Luke and St. Paul were accomplished men, and evidently took pleasure in their accomplishments.

I am not speaking of human *learning*; this also many men think inconsistent with simple uncorrupted faith. They suppose that learning must make a man proud. This is of course a great mistake; but of it I am not speaking, but of an over-jealousy of *accomplishments*, the elegant arts and studies, such as poetry, literary composition, painting, music, and the like; which are considered, (not indeed to make a man *proud*, but) to make him *trifling*. Of this opinion, how far it is true, and how far not true, I am going to speak; being led to the considera-

tion of it by the known fact, that St. Luke was a polished writer, and and yet an Evangelist.

Now, that the accomplishments I speak of have a *tendency* to make us trifling and unmanly, and therefore, are to be viewed by each of us with suspicion as far as regards himself, I am ready to admit, and shall presently make clear. I allow, that in matter of fact, refinement and luxury, elegance and effeminacy, go together. Antioch, the most polished, was the most voluptuous city of Asia. But the *abuse* of good things is no argument against the things themselves; mental cultivation *may* be a divine gift, though it is abused. All God's gifts are perverted by man; health, strength, intellectual power, are all turned by sinners to bad purposes, yet they are not evil in themselves: therefore an acquaintance with the elegant arts may be a gift and a good, and intended to be an instrument of God's glory, though numbers who have it are rendered thereby indolent, luxurious, and feeble-minded.

But the account of the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, from which the text is taken, is decisive on this point. It is too long to read to you, but a few verses will remind you of the nature of it. "Thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the Spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office." "See I have called thy name Bezaleel . . . and have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work all manner of workmanship." "Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of a willing heart let him bring it, an offering of the Lord, gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goat's hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, and oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate, and every wise-hearted among you shall come and make all that the Lord hath commanded."*

How then is it, that what in itself is of so excellent, and (I may say) divine a nature, is yet so commonly perverted? I proceed to state what is the danger, as it appears to me, of being accomplished, with a view to answer this question.

Now, the *danger* of an elegant and polite education is, that it separates feeling and acting; it teaches us to think, speak, and be affected

* Exod. xxviii. 3. xxxi. 2—5. xxxv. 5—10.

aright, without forcing us to practice what is right. I will take an illustration of this, though somewhat a familiar one, from the effect produced on the mind by reading what is commonly called a romance or novel, which comes under the description of polite literature, of which I am speaking. Such works contain many good sentiments; (I am taking the better sort of them,) characters too are introduced, virtuous, noble, patient under suffering, and triumphing at length over misfortune. The great truths of religion are upheld, we will suppose, and enforced: and our affections excited and interested in what is good and true. But it is all fiction; it does not exist out of a book which contains the beginning and end of it. *We have nothing to do*; we read, are affected, softened or roused, and that is all; we cool again,—nothing comes of it. Now observe the effect of this. God has made us feel in order that we may *go on to act* in consequence of feeling; if then we allow our feelings to be excited without acting upon them, we do mischief to the moral system within us, just as we might spoil a watch, or other piece of mechanism, by playing with the wheels of it. We weaken its springs, and they cease to act truly. Accordingly, when we have got into the habit of amusing ourselves with these works of fiction, we come at length to feel the excitement without the slightest thought or tendency to act upon it; and, since it is very difficult to begin any duty *without* some emotion or other, (that is, on mere principles of dry reasoning,) a grave question arises, how, after destroying the connection between feeling and acting, how shall we get ourselves to act when circumstances make it our duty to do so? For instance, we will say we have read again and again, of the heroism of facing danger, and we have glowed with the thought of its nobleness. We have felt how great it is to bear pain, and submit to indignities, rather than wound our conscience; and all this, again and again, when we had no opportunity of carrying our good feelings into practice. Now, suppose at length we actually come into trial, and let us say, our feelings become roused, as often before, at the thought of boldly resisting temptations to cowardice, shall we therefore do our duty, quitting ourselves like men? rather, we are likely to talk loudly, and then run from the danger. Why?—rather let us ask, why *not*? what is to keep us from yielding? Because we *feel* aright? nay, we have again and again felt aright, and thought aright, without accustoming ourselves to act aright, and though there was an original connection in our minds between feeling and acting, there is none now; the wires within us, as they may be called, are loosened and powerless.

And what is here instanced of fortitude, is true in all cases of duty. The refinement which literature gives, is that of thinking, feeling,

knowing and speaking, right, not of acting right; and thus, while it makes the manners amiable, and the conversation decorous and agreeable, it has no tendency to make the conduct, the practice of the man *virtuous*.

Observe, I have supposed the works of fiction, I speak of, to inculcate right sentiments; though such works (play books for example,) are often vicious and immoral. But even at best supposing them well principled, still after all, at best, they are, I say, dangerous in themselves;—that is, if we allow refinement to stand in the place of hardy, rough-handed obedience. It follows, that I am much opposed to certain *religious* novels, which some persons think so useful: that they sometimes do good I am far from denying;—but they do more harm than good. They do harm on the whole; they lead men to cultivate the religious affections separate from religious practice. And here I might speak of that entire religious system, (miscalled religious,) which makes Christian faith consist, not in the honest and plain practice of what is right, but in the luxury of excited religious feeling, in a mere meditating on our Blessed Lord, and dwelling as in a reverie on what He has done for us?—for such indolent contemplation will no more sanctify a man *in fact*, than reading a poem or listening to a chant or psalm-tune.

The case is the same with the arts last alluded to, poetry and music. They are especially likely to make us unmanly, if we are not on our guard, as exciting emotions without ensuring correspondent practice, and so destroying the connection between feeling and acting; for I here mean by unmanliness the inability to do with ourselves what we wish,—the saying fine things, and yet lying slothfully on our couch, as if we could not get up, though we ever so much wished it.

And here I must notice something besides in elegant accomplishments, which goes to make us over-refined and fastidious, and falsely delicate. In books, every thing is made beautiful in its way. Pictures are drawn of *complete* virtue; little is said about failures, and little or nothing of the drudgery of ordinary, every-day obedience, which is neither poetical nor interesting. True faith teaches us to do numberless disagreeable things for Christ's sake, to bear petty annoyances, which we find written down in no book. In most books Christian conduct is made grand, elevated, and splendid; so that any one, who only knows of true religion from books, and not from actual endeavours to be religious, is sure to be offended at religion when he actually comes upon it, from the roughness and humbleness of his duties, and his necessary deficiencies in doing them. It is beautiful in a picture to wash the disci-

ples' feet ; but the sands of the real desert have no comeliness in them to compensate for the servile nature of the occupation.

And further still, it must be observed, that the art of composing, which is a chief accomplishment, has in itself a tendency to make us artificial and insincere. For to be ever attending to the fitness and propriety of our words, is (or at least there is the risk of its being) a kind of acting ; and knowing what can be said on both sides of a subject, is a main step towards thinking the one side as good as the other. Hence men in ancient times, who cultivated polite literature, became what were called "Sophists ;" that is, men who wrote elegantly, and talked eloquently, on any subjects whatever, right or wrong. St. Luke perchance might have been such a Sophist, had he not been a Christian.

Such are some of the dangers of elegant accomplishments ; and they beset more or less all educated persons ; and of these perhaps not the least, such females as happen to have no very direct duties, and are above the drudgery of common life, and hence are apt to become fastidious and fine,—to love a luxurious ease, and to amuse themselves in mere elegant pursuits, the while they admire and profess what is religious and virtuous, and think that they really possess the character of mind which they esteem.

With these thoughts before us, it is necessary to look back to the Scripture instances which I began by adducing, to avoid the conclusion that accomplishments are positively dangerous, and unworthy a Christian. But St. Luke and St. Paul show us, that we may be sturdy workers in the Lord's service, and bear our cross manfully, though we be adorned with all the learning of the Egyptians, or rather, that the resources of literature, and the graces of a cultivated mind, may be made both a lawful source of enjoyment to the possessor, and a means of introducing and recommending the Truth to others ; while the history of the Tabernacle shows that all the cunning arts, and precious possessions of this world, may be consecrated to a religious service, and be made to speak of the world to come. I conclude then with the following cautions, to which the foregoing remarks lead. First, we must avoid giving too much time to lighter occupations, and next, we must never allow ourselves to read works of fiction or poetry, or to interest ourselves in the fine arts for the mere sake of the things themselves ; but keep in mind all along that we are Christians and accountable beings, who have fixed principles of right and wrong, by which all things must be tried, and religious habits to be matured within us, towards which all things are to be made subservient. Nothing is more common among accomplished people, than the habit of reading books so entirely

for reading's sake, as to praise and blame the actions and persons described in a random way, according to their fancy, not considering whether they are really good or bad according to the standard of moral truth. I would not be austere; but when this is done habitually, surely it is dangerous. Such too is the abuse of poetical talent, that sacred gift. Nothing is more common than to fall into the practice of uttering fine sentiments, particularly in letter writing, as a matter of course, or a kind of elegant display. Nothing more common in singing than to use words with a light meaning, or a bad one. All these things are hurtful to seriousness of character. It is for this reason (to put aside others) that the profession of stage-players, and again of orators, is a dangerous one. They learn to say good things, and to excite in themselves vehement feelings, about nothing at all. If we are in earnest, we shall let nothing lightly pass by which may do us good, nor shall we dare to trifle with such sacred subjects as morality and religious duty. We shall apply all we read to ourselves; and this almost without intending to do so, from the mere sincerity and honesty of our desire to please God. We shall be suspicious of all such good thoughts and wishes, and we shall shrink from all such exhibitions of our principles, as fall short of action. We shall aim at doing right, and so glorifying our Father, and shall exhort and constrain others to do so also; but as for talking on the appropriate subjects of religious meditation, and *trying* to show piety, and to excite corresponding feelings in another, even though our nearest friend, far from doing this, we shall account it a snare and a mischief. Yet this is what many persons consider the highest part of religion, and call it spiritual conversation, the test of a spiritual mind; whereas, putting aside the incipient and occasional hypocrisy, and again the immodesty of it, I call all formal and intentional expression of religious emotions, all studied passionate discourse, *dissipation*,—dissipation the same in nature, though different in subject, as what is commonly so called; for it is a drain and a waste of our religious and moral strength, a general weakening of our spiritual powers (as I have already shown) and all for what? for the pleasure of the immediate excitement. Who can deny this religious disorder is a parallel case to that of the sensualist? Nay, precisely the same as theirs, from whom the religionists in question think themselves very far removed, of the fashionable world I mean, who read works of fiction, frequent the public shows, are ever on the watch for novelties, and affect a pride of manners and a “mincing”* deportment, and are ready with all kinds of good thoughts and keen emotions on all occasions.

Of all such as abuse the decencies and elegancies of moral truth into a means of luxurious enjoyment, what would a prophet of God say? Hear the words of the holy Ezekiel, that stern rough man of God, a true Saint in the midst of a self-indulgent high-professing people. "Thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."*

Or, consider St. Paul's words; which are still more impressive, because he was himself a man of learning and accomplishments, and took pleasure, in due place, in the pursuits to which these gave rise.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto fables." "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."†

* Ezek. xxxiii. 30—32.

† 2 Tim. iv. 2—4.

1 Cor. xvi. 13.

SERMON XXXI.

THE FEAST OF ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE THE APOSTLES.

CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

JOHN ii. 17.

The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.

THE Apostles commemorated on this Festival, direct our attention to the subject of Zeal, which I propose to consider, under our Saviour's guidance, as suggested by the text. St. Simon is called Zelotes, which means the Zealous; a title given him (as is supposed) from his belonging before his conversion to the Jewish sect of Zealots, which professed extraordinary Zeal for the law. Any how, the appellation marks him as distinguished for this particular Christian grace. St. Jude's Epistle, which forms part of the service of the day, is almost wholly upon the duty of manifesting Zeal for Gospel Truth, and opens with a direct exhortation to "contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints." The Collect also indirectly reminds us of the same duty, for it prays that all the members of the Church may be united in spirit by the Apostles' doctrine; and what are these but the words of Zeal, viz. of a love for the Truth and the Church so strong as not to allow that man should divide what God hath joined together?

However, it will be a more simple account of Zeal, to call it the earnest desire for God's honour, leading to strenuous and bold deeds in His behalf; and that in spite of all obstacles. Thus when Phinehas stood up and executed judgment in Israel, he was zealous for God. David also, in his punishment of the idolaters round about, and in preparing for the building of the Temple, showed his Zeal, which was one of his especial virtues. Elijah, when he assembled the Israelites upon Mount Carmel, and slew the prophets of Baal, was "very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts." Hezekiah besides, and Josiah, were led to their reformatations in religious worship by an admirable Zeal; and Ne-

hemiah too, after the captivity, who with the very fire and sweetness of Gospel Love set the repentant nation in order for the coming of Christ.

1. Now Zeal is one of the elementary religious qualifications; that is, one of those which are essential in the very notion of a religious man. A man cannot be said to be in earnest in religion, till he magnifies his God and Saviour; till he so far consecrates and exalts the thought of Him in his heart, as an object of praise, and adoration, and rejoicing as to be pained and grieved at dishonour shown to Him, and eager to avenge Him. In a word a religious temper is one of loyalty towards God; and we all know what is meant by being loyal from the experience of civil matters. To be loyal is not merely to obey; but to obey with promptitude, energy, dutifulness, disinterested devotion, disregard of consequences. And such is zeal, except that it is ever attended with that reverential feeling which is due from a creature and a sinner towards his Maker, and towards Him alone. It is a first step in *all* religious service to love God above all things; now Zeal is to love Him above all men, above our dearest and most intimate friends. This was the especial praise of the Levites, which gained them the reward of the Priesthood, viz. their executing judgment on the people in the sin of the golden calf. "Let Thy Thummim and Thy Urim be with Thy Holy One, whom Thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom Thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah. Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have observed Thy word, and kept Thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob Thy Judgments, and Israel Thy Law; they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine Altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." Phinehas was rewarded in like manner, after executing judgment. "Behold I give unto him My covenant of peace. And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his God."* Zeal is the very consecration of God's Ministers to their office. Accordingly, our Blessed Saviour, the One Great High Priest, the Antitype of all Priests who went before Him and the Lord and Strength of who come after, began his manifestation of Himself by two acts of Zeal. When twelve years old He deigned to put before us in representation the sacredness of this duty, when He remained in the Temple "while His father and mother

* Deut. xxxiii. 8—11. Numb. xiv. 12, 13.

sought Him sorrowing," and on their finding Him, returned answer, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" And again, at the opening of His public Ministry, He went into the Temple, and "made a scourge of small cords, and drove out the sheep and oxen, and overthrew the changers' tables"* that profaned it; thus fulfilling the prophecy contained in the text, "The Zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up."

Being thus consumed by Zeal himself, no wonder He should choose His followers from among the Zealous. James and John, whom He called Boanerges, the sons of thunder, had warm hearts, when He called them, however wanting in knowledge; and felt as if an insult offered to their Lord should have called down fire from Heaven. Peter cut off the right ear of one of those who seized Him. Simon was of the sect of the Zealots. St. Paul's case is still more remarkable. He, in his attachment to the elder Covenant of God, had even fought against Christ; but he did so from earnestness, from being "zealous towards God," though blindly. He "verily thought with himself, that he *ought to do* many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," and acted "in ignorance;"† so he was spared. With a sort of heavenly compassion his persecuted Lord told him, that it was "hard for him to kick against the pricks;" and turned his ignorant zeal to better account. On the same ground rests the commendation which that Apostle bestows in turn upon his countrymen, while he sorrowfully condemns their unpardonable obstinacy. "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel," he says, "is, that they might be saved; for I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."‡ They were guilty, because they might have known what they did not know; but so far as they were zealous, they claimed from him a respectful notice, and were far better surely than those haughty scorners, the Romans, who felt no concern whether there was a God or not, worshipped one idol as readily as another, and spared the Apostles from contemptuous pity. Of these was Gallio, who "cared for none of those things," which either Jews or Christians did. Such men are abominated by our Holy Lord, who "honours them that honour Him," while "they that despise Him, are lightly esteemed."§ He signifies this judgment of the lukewarm and disloyal, in His message to the Church of Laodicea. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither

* Luke ii. 48, 49. John ii. 15.

† Acts xxvi. 9. 1 Tim. i. 13

‡ Rom. x. i.

§ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

cold nor hot, I will cast the forth out of My mouth.”* Thus positive misbelief is a less odious state of mind than the temper of those who are indifferent to religion, who say that one opinion is as good as the other, and condemn or ridicule those who are in earnest. Surely, if this world be a scene of contest between good and evil, as Scripture declares, “he that is not with Christ, is against Him;” and Angels who witness what is going on, and can estimate its seriousness, may well cry out “Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”†

I do not deny that this view of the subject is different from that which certain principles and theories now current in the world would lead us to adopt; but this is surely no reason that it should not be true, unless indeed, amid the alternate successes of good and evil, there be any infallible token given us to ascertain the superior illumination of the present century over all those which have preceded it. In fact, we have no standard of Truth at all but the Bible, and to that I would appeal. “To the Law and to the Testimony;” if the opinions of the day are conformable to it, let them remain in honour, but if not, however popular they may be at the moment, they will surely come to nought. It is the present fashion to call Zeal by the name of intolerance, and to account intolerance the chief of sins; that is, any earnestness for one opinion above another concerning God’s nature, will, and dealings with man,—or, in other words, any earnestness for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, any earnestness for Revelation as such. Surely, in this sense, the Apostles were the most intolerant of men; what is it but intolerance in this sense of the word to declare, that “he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life;” that “they that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord;” that “neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;” that we must not even “eat with a brother who is one of such; that we may not “receive into our houses,” or “bid God speed” to any one who comes to us without the “doctrine of Christ?” Has not St. Paul, whom many seem desirous of making an Apostle of less rigid principles than his brethren, said even about an individual, “The Lord reward him according to his works!”‡ and though we of this day have not the spiritual discernment which alone can warrant such a form of

* Rev. iii. 5, 16. † Judg. v. 23.

‡ 1 John v. 12. 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. v. 11. 2 John 10, 11
2 Tim. iv. 14.

words about this man or that, have we not here given us a clear evidence, that there are cases in which God's glory is irreconcilable with the salvation of sinners, and when in consequence, it is not unchristian to acquiesce in His judgments upon them? These words were deliberately written by St. Paul, in the closing days of his life, when his mind was most calm and heavenly, his hope most assured, his reward immediately in view; circumstances which render it impossible for any one who even reverences St. Paul as a man of especial holiness, to explain them away, not to insist on the argument from his inspiration.

Such is Zeal, a Christian grace to the last, while it is also an elementary virtue; equally belonging to the young convert, and the matured believer; displayed by Moses at the first, when he slew the Egyptian, and by St. Paul in his last hours, while he reached forth his hand for his heavenly crown.

2. On the other hand, Zeal is an imperfect virtue; that is, in our fallen state, it will ever be attended by unchristian feelings, if it is cherished by itself. This is the case with many other tempers of mind, which yet are absolutely required of us. Who denies that it is a duty in the returning sinner to feel abhorrence of his past offences, and a dread of God's anger? Yet such feelings, unless faith accompany them, lead to an unfruitful remorse, to despair, to hardened pride; or again, to perverse superstitions. Not that humiliation is wrong in any sense or degree, but it induces collateral weaknesses or sins, from unduly exciting one side of our imperfect nature. Mercy becomes weakness, when unattended by a sense of justice and firmness; the wisdom of the serpent becomes craft, unless it be received into the harmlessness of the dove. And Zeal, in like manner, though an essential part of a Christian temper, is but a part; and is in itself imperfect, even for the very reason that it is elementary. Hence it appropriately fills so prominent a place in the Jewish Dispensation, which was intended to lay the foundations, as of Christian Faith, so of the Christian character. Whether we read the injunctions delivered by Moses against idolatry and idolaters, or trace the actual history of God's chosen servants, such as Phinehas, Samuel, Elijah, and especially David, we find that the Law was peculiarly a Covenant of Zeal. On the other hand, the Gospel brings out into its full proportions, that perfect temper of mind, which the Law enjoined indeed, but was deficient both in enforcing and creating,—Love; that is, Love or Charity, as described by St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, which is not merely brotherly-love, (a virtue ever included in the notion of Zeal itself,) but a general temper of gentleness, meekness, sympathy, tender consideration, open-heartedness towards all men, brother or stranger, who come in our way. In

this sense, Zeal is of the Law, and Love of the Gospel ; and Love perfects Zeal, purifying and regulating it. Thus the Saints of God go on unto perfection. Moses ended his life as "the meekest of men," though he began it with undisciplined Zeal, which led him to a deed of violence. St. John, who would call down fire from heaven, became the Apostle of love ; St. Paul, who persecuted Christ's servants, "was made all things to all men ;" yet, neither of them lost their Zeal, though they trained it to be spiritual.

Love, however, is not the only grace which is necessary to the perfection of Zeal ; Faith is another. This, at first sight may sound strange ; for what is Zeal, it may be asked but a result of Faith ? who is zealous for that in which he does not trust and delight ? Yet, it must be kept in mind, that we have need of Faith, not only that we may direct our actions to a right object, but that we may perform them rightly ; it guides us in choosing the means, as well as the end. Now, Zeal is very apt to be self-willed ; it takes upon itself to serve God in its own way. This is evident from the very nature of it : for, in its ruder form, it manifests itself in sudden and strong emotions at the sight of presumption or irreverence, proceeding to action almost as a matter of feeling without having time to inquire which way is best. Thus, when our Lord was seized by the officers, Peter forthwith "drew his sword, and struck a servant of the High Priest's, and smote off his ear."* Patience then, and resignation to God's will, are tempers of mind of which Zeal especially stands in need,—that dutiful faith, which will take nothing for granted on the mere suggestion of nature, looks up to God with the eyes of a servant towards his master, and, as far as may be, ascertains His will before it acts. If this heavenly corrective be wanting, Zeal, as I have said, is self-willed in its temper ; while, by using sanctions, and expecting results of this world, it becomes (what is commonly called,) political. Here, again, we see the contrast between the Jewish and the Christian Dispensations. The Jewish Law being a visible system, sanctioned by temporal rewards and punishments, necessarily involved the duty of a political temper on the part of those who were under it. They were bound to aim at securing the triumph of Religion here ; realising its promises, enjoying its successes, enforcing its precepts with the sword. This, I say, was their duty ; and, as fulfilling it, among other reasons, David is called "a man after God's own heart." But the Gospel teaches us to "walk by Faith, not by sight ;" and Faith teaches us so to be zealous, as still to forbear anticipating the next world, but to wait till the Judge shall come. St. Peter drew his sword, in order (as he

* Matt. xxvi. 51.

thought) to realize at once that good work on which his heart was set, our Lord's deliverance; and, on this very account, he met with that Saviour's rebuke, who presently declared to Pilate, that His Kingdom was not of this world, else would His servants fight. Christian Zeal, therefore, ever bears in mind that the Mystery of Iniquity is to continue on till the Avenger solves it once for all; it renounces all hope of hastening His coming, all desire of intruding upon His work. It has no vain imaginings about the world's real conversion to Him, however men may acknowledge Him outwardly, knowing that it lies in wickedness. It has recourse to no officious modes of propagating or strengthening His truth. It does not flatter and ally itself with Samaria, in order to repress Syria. It does not exalt an Idumean as its king, though he be willing to beautify the Temple, or has influence with the Emperors of the World. It plans no intrigues; it recognizes no parties; it relies on no arm of flesh. It looks for no essential improvements or permanent reformations, in the dispensation of these precious gifts which are ever pure in their origin, ever corrupted in man's use of them. It acts according to God's will, (this time or that, as it comes,) boldly and promptly; yet letting each act stand by itself, as a sufficient service to Him, not connecting them by hope, or working them into system, further than He commands. In a word, Christian Zeal is not political.

Two reflections arise from considering this last characteristic of the virtue in question; and with a brief notice of these I will conclude.

1. First, it is too evident how grievously the Roman Schools have erred in this part of Christian duty. Let their doctrines be as pure as they would represent, still they have indisputably made their Church an instrument of worldly politics by a "zeal not according to knowledge." Let us grant that her creed was not formally erroneous till the sixteenth century; nevertheless, from the eleventh, at least, she has made Christ's Kingdom of this world. I will not inquire whether she committed the additional most miserable sin of rebellion against Caesar; though, from what we see around us at this day, there is great reason to fear, that from the beginning of her power she has been tainted with it. But consider the principles recognised in her practice, though not adopted into her formal teaching, since the date I have mentioned, and then say whether she has not failed in this essential duty of a Christian Witness, viz. in preserving the spiritual character of Christ's kingdom.* In saying this, I would not willingly deny the great debt we owe to that

* Among the principles referred to are the following, which occur among the *Dic-tatus Hildebrandi*: "Quod liceat illi [Papæ] imperatores deponere;" "Quod a fidelitate iniquorum subditos potest absolvere." Vide Laud against Fisher, p. 181.

Church for her faithful custody of the Faith itself through so many centuries; nor seem unmindful of the circumstances of other times, the gradual growth of religious error, and the external dangers which appeared to place the cause of Christianity itself in jeopardy, and to call for extraordinary measures of defence. Much less would I speak disrespectfully of the eminent men who were the agents under Providence in various stages of that mysterious Dispensation, and whom, however our Zeal may burn, we must in very Charity believe to be, what their works and sufferings betoken, single-minded, self-denying servants of their God and Saviour.

2. The Roman Church then has become political; but let us of the present day beware of running into the other extreme, and of supposing that, because Christ's Kingdom is not based upon this world, it is not connected with it. Surely it was established here for the sake of this world, and must ever act in it as if a part of it, though its origin is from above. Like the Angels which appeared to the Patriarchs, it is a Heavenly Messenger in human form. In its Polity, its Public Assemblies, its Rules and Ordinances, its Censures, and its Possessions, it is a visible body, and, to appearance, an institution of this world. It is no faulty zeal to labour to preserve it in the form in which Christ gave it.

And further, it should ever be recollected, that, though the Church is not of this world, yet we have assurance from God's infallible word, that there *are* in the world temporal and present Dispensers of His Eternal Justice. We are expressly told, that "the powers that be are ordained of God;" that they "bear not the sword in vain, but are ministers of God, revengers to execute wrath upon the evil doer," and bestow "praise" on those who do well. Hence, as being gifted with a portion of God's power, they hold an office of a priestly nature,* and are armed with the fearful sanction, that "they that resist them, shall receive to themselves Judgment." On this ground, religious Rulers have always felt it to be their duty to act as in God's place for the promulgation of the Truth; and the Church, on the other hand, has seen her obligation not only to submit to them in things temporal, but zealously to co-operate with them in her own line, towards those sacred objects which they have both in common. And thus has been happily fulfilled, for fifteen hundred years, Isaiah's prophecy, that "kings should be nursing fathers to the Church, and queens her nursing mothers." Yet, clearly there is nothing here, either of a self-willed zeal, or political craft, in the conduct of the Church; inasmuch as she has but submitted herself thereby to the guidance of the revealed Word.

* λειτουργοὶ Θεοῦ. Rom. xiii. 1—6.

May Almighty God, for His dear Son's sake, lead us safely through these dangerous times; so that, while we never lay aside our Zeal for His honour, we may sanctify it by Faith and Charity, neither staining our garments by wrath or violence, nor soiling them with the dust of a turbulent world!

SERMON XXXII.]

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

USE OF SAINTS' DAYS.

Acts i. 8.

Ye shall be Witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

So many were the wonderful works which our Saviour did on earth, that not even the world itself could have contained the books recording them. Nor have his marvels been less since He ascended on high;—those works of higher grace and more abiding fruit, wrought in the souls of men, from the first hour till now,—the captives of His power, the ransomed heirs of His kingdom, whom He has called by His Spirit working in due season, and led on from strength to strength till they appear before His face in Zion. Surely not even the world itself could contain the records of His love, the history of those many Saints, that “cloud of Witnesses,” whom we to-day celebrate, His purchased possession in every age! We crowd these all up into one day; we mingle together in the brief remembrance of an hour all the choicest deeds, the holiest lives, the noblest labours, the most precious sufferings, which the sun ever saw. Even the least of those Saints were the contemplation of many days,—even the names of them, if read in our Service, would outrun many settings and risings of the light,—even one passage in the life of one of them were more than sufficient for a long discourse. “Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part

of Israel.* Martyrs and Confessors, Rulers and Doctors of the Church, devoted Ministers and Religious brethren, kings of the earth and all people, princes and judges of the earth, young men and maidens, old men and children, the first fruits of all ranks, ages, and callings, gathered each in his own time into the paradise of God. This is the blessed company which to-day meets the Christian pilgrim in the Services of the Church. We are like Jacob, when, on his journey homewards, he was encouraged by a heavenly vision. "Jacob went on his way, and the Angels of God met him; and when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host, and he called the name of that place Mahanaim."†

And such a host was also seen by the favoured Apostle, as described in the chapter from which the Epistle of the day is taken. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."‡

This great multitude, which no man could number, is gathered into this one day's commemoration, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, the Children of the Holy Church Universal, who have rested from their labours.

The reason of this disposition of things is as follows:—Some centuries ago there were too many Saints' days; and they became an excuse for idleness. Nay, worse still, by a great and almost incredible perverseness, instead of glorifying God in His Saints, Christians came to pay them an honour approaching to divine worship. The consequence was, that it became necessary to take away their Festivals, and to commemorate them all at once in a summary way. Now men go into the contrary extreme. These Holydays, few though they be, are not duly observed. Such is the way of mankind, ever contriving to slip by their duty, and fall into one or other extreme of error. Idle or busy, they are in both cases wrong; idle, and so neglecting their duties towards man; busy, and so neglecting their duties towards God. We have little to do however with the faults of others;—let us then, passing by the error of idling time under pretence of observing many Holydays, rather speak of the fault of our own day, viz., of neglecting to observe them, and that, under pretence of being too busy.

Our Church abridged the number of Holydays, thinking it right to have but a few; but we account any as too much. For, taking us as

* Numb. xxiii. 10.

† Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

‡ Rev. vii. 9, 14.

a nation, we are bent on gain; and grudge any time which is spent without reference to our worldly business. We should seriously reflect whether this neglect of the appointments of religion be not a great national sin. As to individuals, I can easily understand how it is that they pass them over. A considerable number of persons, (for instance,) have not their time at their own disposal. They are in service or business, and it is their duty to attend to the orders of their masters or employers,—which keep them from Church. Or they have particular duties to keep them at home, though they are their own masters. Or, it even may be said, that the circumstances under which they find their calling, the mode in which it is exercised by others, may be a sort of reason for doing as others do. It may be such a worldly loss to them to leave their trade on a Saint's-day and go to Church, as to appear to them a reason in conscience for their not doing so. I do not wish to give an opinion upon this case or that, which is a matter for the individual immediately concerned. Still, I say *on the whole*, that state of society must be defective, which renders it necessary for the Ordinances of religion to be neglected. There must be a fault *somewhere*; and it is the duty of every one of us to clear himself of his own portion of the fault, to avoid partaking in other men's sins, and to do his utmost that others may extricate themselves from the blame too.

I say this neglect of religious ordinances is an especial fault of these latter ages. There was a time when men openly honoured the Gospel; and when, consequently, they had each of them more means of becoming religious. The institutions of the Church were impressed upon the face of society. Dates were reckoned not so much by months and seasons, as by sacred Festivals. The world kept pace with the Gospel; the arrangements of legal and commercial business were regulated by a Christian rule. Something of this still remains among us; but such customs are fast vanishing. Mere grounds of utility are considered sufficient for re-arranging the order of secular engagements. Men think it waste of time to wait upon the course of the Christian year; and they think they gain more by a business-like method, and the neatness, despatch, and clearness in the worldly transactions consequent upon it, (and this perhaps they really *do* gain,) but they think they gain *more* by it, than they lose by dropping the Memorials of religion. These they really do lose; they lose those regulations which at stated times brought the concerns of another life before their minds; and, if the truth must be spoken, they often rejoice in losing what officiously interfered, as they consider, with their temporal schemes, and reminded them they were mortal.

Or view another part of the subject. It was once the custom for the Churches to be open through the day, that at spare times Christians might enter them, and be able to throw off for some minutes the cares of the world in religious exercises. Services were appointed for separate hours in the day, to allow of the attendance in whole or in part of those who happened to be at hand. Those who could not come still might keep their service-book with them; and at least repeat at times the prayers in private which were during the passing hour offered in Church. Thus provision was made for the spiritual sustenance of Christians day by day; for that daily-needed bread which far exceeds "the bread that perisheth." All this is now at an end. We dare not open our Churches, lest men should profane them instead of worshipping. As for an accurately arranged Ritual, too many of us have learned to despise it, and to consider it a form. Thus the world has encroached on the Church; the lean kine have eaten up the fat. We are threatened with years of spiritual famine, with the triumph of the enemies of the Truth, and with the stifling, or at least enfeebling of the Voice of Truth;—and why? All because we have neglected those religious observances through the year which the Church commands, which we are bound to observe; while, by neglecting, we have provided a sort of argument for those who have wished to do them away altogether. No party of men can keep together without stated meetings; assemblies are, we know, the very life of political associations. Viewing, then, the institutions of the Church merely in a human point of view, how can we possess power as Christians, if we do *not*, and on the other hand, what great power we should have, if we *did*, flock to the Ordinances of religion, present a bold face to the world, and show that Christ has still servants true to Him? That we come to Church on Sundays is a help this way doubtless; but it would be a vastly more powerful evidence of our earnestness for the Truth, if we testified for Christ at some worldly inconvenience to ourselves, which would be the case with some of us on other Holydays. Can we devise a more powerful mode of preaching to men at large, and one in which the most unlearned and most timid among us might more easily partake, of preaching Christ as a warning and a remembrance, than if all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, made it a practice to throng the Churches on the week-day Festivals and various Holy Seasons, allowing less religious persons the while to make the miserable gains, which greater keenness in the pursuit of this world certainly does secure?

I have not yet mentioned the peculiar benefit to be derived from the observance of Saints' days: which obviously lies in their setting before the mind patterns of excellence for us to follow. In directing us

to these, the Church does but fulfil the design of Scripture. Consider how great a part of the Bible is historical ; and how much of the history is merely the lives of those men who were God's instruments in their respective ages. Some of them are no patterns for us, others show marks of the corruption under which human nature universally lies : yet the chief of them are specimens of especial faith and sanctity, and are set before us with the evident intention of exciting and guiding us in our religious course. Such are above others, Abraham, Joseph, Job, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the like ; and in the New Testament the Apostles and Evangelists. First of all, and in His own incommunicable glory, our Blessed Lord Himself gives us an example ; but His faithful servants lead us on towards Him, and confirm and diversify His pattern. Now, it has been the aim of our Church in her Saints' days to maintain the principle, and set a pattern, of this peculiarly Scriptural teaching.

And we, at the present day, have particular need of the discipline of such commemorations as Saints' days, to recall us to ourselves. It is a fault of these times, (for we have nothing to do with the faults of other times) to despise the past in comparison of the present. We can scarce open any of the lighter or popular publications of the day without falling upon some panegyric on ourselves, on the illumination and humanity of the age, or upon some disparaging remarks on the wisdom and virtues of former times. Now it is a most salutary thing under this temptation to self-conceit to be reminded that in all the highest qualifications of human excellence, we have been far outdone by men who lived centuries ago ; that a standard of truth and holiness was then set up, which we are not likely to reach, and that, as for thinking to become wiser and better, or more acceptable to God than they were, it is a mere dream. Here we are taught the true value and relative importance of the various gifts of the mind. The showy talents, in which the present age prides itself, fade away before the true metal of Prophets and Apostles. Its boasted "knowledge" is but a shadow of "power" before the vigorous strength of heart which they displayed, who could calmly work miracles, as well as speak with the lips of inspired wisdom. Would that St. Paul or St. John could rise from the dead ! How would the minute philosophers who now consider intellect and enlightened virtue all their own, shrink into nothing before those well-tempered, sharp-edged weapons of the Lord ! Are not we come to this ? is it not our shame as a nation, that, if not the Apostles themselves, at least the ecclesiastical System they devised, and the Order they founded, are viewed with coldness and disrespect ? How few are there who look with reverent interest upon the Bishops of the Church as the Suc.

cessors of the Apostles; honouring them, if they honour, merely because they like them as individuals, and not from any thought of peculiar sacredness of their office! Well, let it be! the End must one time come. It cannot be that things should stand still thus. Christ's Church is indistructible; and, lasting on through all the vicissitudes of this world, she *must* rise again and flourish, when the poor creatures of a day who opposed her, have crumbled into dust. "No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper." "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."* In the mean time let us not forget our duty; which is after the example of Saints, to take up our cross meekly, and pray for our enemies.

These are thoughts suitably to be impressed on us, on ending (as we do now) the yearly Festivals of the Church. Every year brings wonders. We know not any year, what wonders shall have happened before the circle of Festivals has run out again, from St. Andrew's to all Saints'. Our duty then is, to wait for the Lord's coming, to prepare His way before Him, to pray that when he comes we may be found watching, to pray for our country, for our King and all in authority under him, that God would vouchsafe to enlighten the understandings and change the hearts of men in power, and make them act in His faith and fear, for all orders and conditions of men, and especially for that branch of His Church which He has planted here. Let us not forget, in our lawful and fitting horror at evil men, that they have souls, and that they know not what they do, when they oppose the truth. Let us not forget, that we are sons of sinful Adam as well as they, and have had advantages to aid our faith and obedience above other men. Let us not forget, that, as we are called to be Saints, so we are, by that very calling, called to suffer; and, if we suffer, must not think it strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try us, nor be puffed up by our privilege of suffering, nor bring suffering needlessly upon us, nor be eager to make out we have suffered for Christ, when we have but suffered for our faults, or not at all. May God give us grace to act upon these rules, as well as to adopt and admire them; and to say nothing for saying's sake, but to do much and say little!

* Isaiah liv. 17. Micah vii. 8.

NOTE

ON SERMON XIII.—P. 293.

THE instrumentality of the Spiritual Sustenance received in the Lord's Supper, in the renewal of the whole man, body as well as soul, in holiness and immortality, is a doctrine so solemn, so momentous in its influence upon the entire Christian system, and so little understood at the present day, that it may be right to cite one or two authorities in support of it. This is done, not under the notion that such authorities will weigh with certain reasoners, but in order that those whose minds are not made up on the subject, may see *how far* they must go, if they would at once scornfully or rudely reject the doctrine thus sanctioned; involving, as they necessarily must in such treatment, a disrespect towards writers, whose opinions, though not infallible, have ever a claim on the consideration and deference of members of the Church.

Hooker is known to be opposed to any formal doctrinal assertion of the presence of Christ in the sacred Elements, and especially on this ground, *lest* any such should withdraw our minds from His real presence and operation in the soul and body of the recipient. The following passages are from his Ecclesiastical Polity, v. 56, 57. 67. "We are by nature the sons of Adam. When God created Adam, He created us; and as many as are descended from Adam, have in themselves the root out of which they spring. The sons of God we neither are all, nor any one of us, otherwise than only by grace and favour. The sons of God have God's own natural Son as a second Adam from heaven, whose race and progeny they are by spiritual and heavenly birth. God therefore loving eternally His Son, He must needs eternally in Him have loved and preferred before all others, them which are spiritually thence descended and sprung out of Him Our being in Christ by eternal foreknowledge, saveth us not without our actual and real adoption into the fellowship of His Saints in this present world. For in Him we actually are, by our actual incorporation into that Society which hath Him for their head; and doth make together with Him one body, (He and they in that respect having one name,) for which cause, by virtue of this mystical conjunction, we are of Him, and in Him, even as though our very flesh and bones should be made continue with His. . . . The Church is in Christ, as Eve was in Adam. Yea, by grace we are every of us in Christ and in His Church, as by nature we were in those of our first parents. God made Eve of the rib of Adam; and His Church He frameth out of the very flesh, the very wounded and bleeding side of the Son of Man. His body crucified, and His blood shed for the life of the world, are the True Elements of that heavenly being, which maketh us such as Himself is, of whom we come. For which cause, the words of Adam may be fitly the words of Christ concerning His Church, 'Flesh of My flesh, and bone of My bones;' a true nature extract out of my own body. So that in Him, *even ac-*

cording to His Manhood, we, according to our heavenly being, are as branches in that root out of which they grow. . . . Adam is in us as an original cause of our nature, and of that corruption of nature which causeth death ; Christ, as the cause original of restoration to life. The person of Adam is not in us, but his nature, and the corruption of his nature derived into all men by propagation, Christ having Adam's nature, as we have, but incorrupt, deriveth not nature, but incorruption, and *that immediately from His own person*, into all that belong unto Him. As therefore we are really partakers of the body of sin and death received from Adam, so except we be truly partakers of Christ, and *as really* possessed of His Spirit, all we speak of eternal life is but a dream. *That which quickeneth us is the Spirit of the second Adam, and His Flesh is that wherewith He quickeneth.* That which in Him made our nature uncorrupt was the union of His Deity with our nature . . . These things St. Cyril duly considering, reproveth their speeches, which taught that only the Deity of Christ is the vine whereupon we by faith do depend as branches, and *that neither His Flesh, nor our bodies, are comprised in this resemblance.* For, *doth any man doubt, but that even from the Flesh of Christ, our very bodies do receive that life which shall make them glorious at the latter day ; and for which they are already accounted parts of His Blessed Body ?* . . . Christ is, therefore, both as God and *as man*, that true vine, whereof we, both spiritually and corporally, are branches. The mixture of His bodily substance with ours, is a thing which the ancient Fathers disclaim." . . . That saving grace which Christ originally is, or hath for the general good of His whole Church, by Sacraments He severally deriveth into every member thereof. Sacraments serve as the instruments of God, to that end and purpose. . . . Our souls and bodies quickened to eternal life, are effects, the cause whereof, is the Person of Christ ; His body and blood are the true well-spring out of which this life floweth. So that His Body and Blood are in that very subject whereunto they minister life ; not only by effect or operation, even as the influence of the heavens is in plants, beasts, men, and in every thing which they quicken ; but also by a far more divine and mystical kind of union, which maketh us one with Him, even as He and the Father are one. The real presence of Christ's most Blessed Body and Blood is not therefore to be sought for in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament. . . . They (the Sacramentaries) grant that these holy Mysteries, received in due manner, do instrumentally both make us partakers of the grace of that Body and Blood which were given for the life of the world, and *besides also impart to us, even in true and real, though mystical manner, the very person of our Lord Himself, whole, perfect, and entire.*" . . . It is impossible to do justice to this most instructive Author by mere extracts. The whole of his discussion should be diligently read and mastered by those who wish to know the sublime, yet cautious doctrine of our Church on the subject, securing essentials here as elsewhere, but allowing her children to differ as to minuter points. It is plain, that Hooker accounted the Lord's Supper as a chief means of conveying to the body a principle of life, distinct altogether from that physical life we now live, the seed of immortality not to be developed till the resurrection, the rudiment of the spiritual body which will then be given us. (Vide

§ 68. fin.) But too many students and writer's glance over his pages in a careless way, and not imagining that his statements are to be interpreted in their plain sense, do but find in them an obscurity, which they attribute to an antiquated style; or going further, they interpret "mystical" to mean nothing more than "figurative," and consider his whole discussion, the over-subtle treatment of a true but merely general analogy; or, further still, a mere unintelligible disputation derived from the schools.

Ignatius, Epist. ad Ephes. 20. ἓνα ἄρτον κλῖντες, ὥς ἐστι φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, ἀντίδοτος τοῦ ἀποθάνειν ἀλλὰ ζῆν ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ διὰ πάντας.

Irenæus contr. Hæres. iv. 18. plainly discriminates between the body considered as physical and mortal, and the spiritual body that shall be, and describes the Eucharist as the present seed of the latter. Πῶς τὴν σάρκα λήγουσιν εἰς φθόραν χωρεῖν, καὶ μὴ μετέχειν τῆς ζωῆς, τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ σωματός τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ τρεφόμενῃ; . . . ὥς γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς ἄρτος προσλαμβάνομενος τὴν ἑκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκέτι κοινὸς ἄρτος ἐστίν, ἀλλ' εὐχαριστία, ἐκ δύο πραγμάτων συνεστηκυῖα, ἐπιγίγνεται τε καὶ εὐχαρίστου οὐσίας καὶ τὰ σώματα ἡμῶν μεταλαμβάνοντα τῆς εὐχαριστίας, μικροῖς εἶναι θύρατα, τὴν ἑκκλησίαν τῆς εἰς αἰῶνας ἀναστάσεως ἔχοντα.

Again, v 2. Ἐπεὶ δὲ μέλη αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ διὰ τῆς κτίσεως τρεφόμεθα, τὴν δὲ κτίσιν ἡμῖν αὐτὸς παρέχει, τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλων, καὶ βρέχων, καθὼς βούλεται, τοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ποτήριον, αἷμα ἰδὼν ὑμολόγησεν, ἐξ οὗ τὸ ἡμέτερον δεῖν αἷμα, καὶ τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς κτίσεως ἄρτον, ἰδὼν σῶμα διεβεβαίωσατο, ὡς οὗ τὰ ἡμέτερα αὐξί σώματα. Ὅποτε οὖν καὶ τοῦ κικραμένου ποτήριον, καὶ ὁ γεγωνὺς ἄρτος ἐπιδέχεται τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ γίνεταί ἡ εὐχαριστία σῶμα Χριστοῦ, ἐκ τούτων δὲ αὖξί καὶ συνίσταται ἡ τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν ὑπόστασις, πῶς δικτικὴν μὴ εἶναι λέγουσι τὴν σάρκα τῆς σωτῆρος τοῦ Θεοῦ ὅτι ζῶν αἰῶνως, τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος καὶ αἵματος τοῦ Κυρίου τρεφόμενῃ, καὶ μέλος αὐτοῦ ὑπάρχουσιν; κ. τ. λ.

Athanasius, de Incarnat. § 16. [p. 883, ed. Benedict.] ἰδίᾳ γὰρ ἡμᾶς ἐν τῇ εὐχῇ, ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰὼνι αἰτεῖν τὸ ἐπιούσιον ἄρτον, τουτίστι τὸν μέλλοντα, οὗ ἀπαρχὴν ἔχομεν ἐν τῇ νῦν ζωῇ τῆς σαρκὸς τοῦ Κυρίου μεταλαμβάνοντες . . . πνεῦμα γὰρ ζωοποιούν ἡ σὰβξ ἐστὶ τοῦ Κυρίου.

Chrysostom, Hom. xxiv. in 1 Cor. [t. xi. p. 257, ed. Duc.] Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡ προτέρα τῆς σαρκὸς φύσις ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς διαπλασθείσα ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας ἐφάσσε νεκράσθαι, καὶ ζωῆς γενέσθαι ἔρμος, ἔτερον, ὥς ἂν εἶποι τις, μάζαν καὶ ζύμην ἐπιστήλας, τὴν αὐτοῦ σάρκα, φύσει μὲν οὖσαν τὴν αὐτὴν, ἀμαρτίας δὲ ἀππληγμένην, καὶ ζωῆς ζήμουσαν· καὶ πᾶσαν ἔδωκεν αὐτὴς μεταλαμβάνειν, ἵνα ταύτῃ τρεφόμενοι καὶ τὴν προτέραν ἀποθήμενοι τὴν νεκράν, εἰς τὴν ζωὴν τὴν ἀθάνατον διὰ τῆς τραπέζης ἀνακερσβῶμεν ταύτης.

Vid. Cyril. Alex. t. vi. Explan. Duodec. Cap. p. 156. d. contr. Julian. t. viii. p. 258. b. &c. Apollin. apud Theodor. Eranist. ii. fin.

A number of instances from the Fathers is supplied in Johnson's Unbloody Sacrifice, Part ii. ch. ii. § i. Vid. also Petav. de Incarn. ii. 8, 9. x. 2. Vide also Patrick's Mensa Mystica, Sect. i. ch. 5. It is scarcely necessary to refer to the Homily on the Sacrament, Part i., and our Communion Service, for concise statements of the same doctrine.

PAROCHIAL SERMONS.

VOL. III.

OF THE LONDON EDITION.

ADVERTISEMENT.

AN opinion having been expressed in several quarters of the resemblance of some of the doctrinal statements in these volumes of Sermons to those received in the Church of Rome, the author has been led to point out some of the distinctions between Romanism and what he conceives to be the genuine Anglican theology, in a series of Lectures upon the Prophetical office of the Church. Here he will but observe, that if the system commonly called Popery be a perversion or corruption of the Truth, as we believe, it must, by the mere force of the terms, be like that Truth which it counterfeits: and therefore, that the fact of a resemblance, as far as it is borne out, is no proof of any essential approximation in his opinions to Popery, as such. Rather, it would be a serious argument against their primitive character, if to superficial observers they bore no likeness to it. Ultra-Protestantism could never have been silently corrupted into Popery.

S E R M O N I .

ABRAHAM AND LOT.

GEN. xiii. 10, 11.

Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan.

THE lesson to be gained from the history of Abraham and Lot is obviously this,—that nothing but a clear apprehension of things unseen, a simple trust in God's promises, and the greatness of mind thence arising, can make us act above the world, indifferent, or almost so, to its comforts, enjoyments, and friendships; or in other words, that its goods corrupt the common run even of religious men who possess them. Lot, as well as Abraham, left his own country "by faith," in obedience to God's command; yet on a further trial, in which the will of God was not so clearly signified, the one was found "without spot and blameless," the other "was saved so as by fire." Abraham became the "father of all them that believe;" Lot obscured the especial hope of his calling,—impaired the privileges of his election,—for a time allowed himself to resemble the multitude of men, as now seen in a Christian country, who are religious to a certain point, and inconsistent in their lives, not aiming at perfection.

His history may be divided into three parts:—first, from the time of his setting out with Abraham from Haran, to their separation; then from his settlement in the cities of the plain (as they are called,) of which Sodom was one, till his captivity and rescue; and lastly, from his return to Sodom, to his escape thence to the mountain, under the Angel's guidance, when the Scripture history loses sight of him. Let us review these in order.

1. When Abraham and Lot first came into the land of Canaan they had received, as it seems, no divine direction where they were to settle. They first came to Sichem; thence they went on to the neighbourhood of Bethel; at length a famine drove them down to Egypt; and after his the history of their temptation (for so it must be called) begins.

Abraham and Lot had given up this world at the word of God ; but a more difficult trial remained. Though never easy, yet it is easier to set our hearts on religion, when we have nothing else to engage them,—or to take some one decided step, which throws us out of our line of life, and in a manner forces upon us what we should naturally shrink from ; than to possess in good measure the goods of this world, and yet love God supremely. Many a man might make a sacrifice of his worldly interests from impulse ; and then having little to unsettle him, he is enabled to hold fast his religion, and serve God consistently and acceptably. Of course men who make such sacrifices, often evidence much strength of character in making them, which doubtless was Lot's case when he left his country. But it is even a greater thing, it requires a clearer, steadier, nobler faith, to be surrounded with worldly goods, yet to be self-denying ; to consider ourselves but stewards of God's bounty, and to be "faithful in all things" committed to us. In this then lay the next temptation which befel the two patriarchs. God gave them riches and importance. When they went down to Egypt, Abraham was honourably received by the king of the country. Soon after, it is said that Abraham had "sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels:" again, that "Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold;" and presently, that "Lot also . . . had flocks, and herds, and tents."* The consequence was, that, on their return to Canaan, their households and cattle had become too numerous for one place : "The land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together ; for their substance was great so that they could not dwell together."† Their servants quarrelled in consequence ; each party, for instance, endeavouring to secure the richest pastures, and the best supplied wells. This discordance in the chosen family was, of course, very unseemly, as witnessed by idolaters, the Canaanites, and Perizzites, who lived in the neighbourhood. Abraham accordingly proposed a friendly separation, and left it to Lot to choose what part of the country he would settle in. Here was the trial of Lot's faith ; let us see how he met it. It so happened that the most fruitful region, the plain of Jordan, was in the hands of an abandoned people, the inhabitants of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities. Now the wealth which Lot had hitherto enjoyed had been given him as a pledge of God's favour, and had its chief value as coming from Him. But surely he forgot this, and esteemed it for his own sake, when he allowed himself to be attracted by the richness and beauty of a guilty and devoted country. The prosperity of a wicked people could not be account-

* Gen. xi. 16. xiii. 2. 5.

† Gen. xiii. 6.

ed a mark of God's love ; but to look toward Sodom was to go the way of the world, and to make wealth the measure of all things, and the end of life. In the words of the text, "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where . . . even as the garden of Eden . . . And Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan . . . and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." I do not see how we can deny that this was a false step in the holy patriarch, blameable in itself, and leading to most serious consequences. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God," says the Psalmist, "than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."* But those who have accustomed their minds to look on worldly prosperity as highly desirable in itself, take it wherever they meet with it ;—now as given by God, and now, again, when not given by Him. It is not to them a point of first importance *by whom* it is given, at least not in their secret hearts : though they might, perhaps, be surprised did any one so tell them. If all this does not in its fulness apply to Lot, his history at least reminds us of what takes place daily in instances which resemble it externally. Men still consider themselves, and promise themselves to be, consistent worshippers of the One True God, while they are falling into that sin which the Apostle calls "idolatry,"—the love and worship of the creature for the Creator.

In the meantime Abraham is left without any earthly portion, but with God's presence for his inheritance : and so God witnessed it : for, as if to reward him for his disinterestedness, He renewed to him the promise already made him, of the future grant of the whole land, including even that fair portion of which Lot had temporary possession. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward ; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee."†

2. Thus ends the first portion of the history of Abraham and Lot :—To proceed : God is so merciful that He suffers not His favoured servants to wander from Him without repeated warnings. They cannot be "as the heathen : " they are pursued with gracious visitings, as Jonah when he fled away. Lot had chosen the habitation of sinners ; still he

* Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

† Gen. xiii. 14—17.

was not left to himself. A calamity was sent to warn and chasten him ;—we are not told indeed that this was the intention of it, but we know even by the light of nature that all affliction is calculated to try and improve us, and so it is fair to say that this was the design of the violence and captivity to which Lot was soon exposed. Sodom, Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities, which were subject to Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, at this time revolted from him. In consequence their country was overrun by his forces and those of his allies ; and, a battle taking place, the kings of those cities were defeated and killed, and “their goods and victuals” taken. Lot also and his property fell into their hands. Thus, independently of religious considerations, his place of abode had its disadvantage in that very fertility and opulence which he had coveted, and which attracted the notice of those whose power enabled them to be rapacious. Abraham at this time dwelt in the plain of Mamre, and on hearing the news of his kinsman’s capture, he at once assembled his own followers, to the number of above three hundred men, and being joined by several princes of the country with whom he was confederate, he pursued the plunderers, surprised them by night, routed them, and rescued Lot with his fellow-captives and all his goods.

This, I have said, was a gracious warning to Lot, not a warning only, it seems also to have been an opportunity of breaking off his connection with the people of Sodom, and removing from the sinful country. However, he did not take it as such. Nothing indeed is said of his return thither in this passage of the history ; but in the narrative which follows shortly after, we find him still in Sodom, though not involved in the Divine vengeance inflicted upon it :—but of this more presently.

Let us first turn by way of contrast to Abraham. How many excuses might he have made to himself, had he so willed, for neglecting his kinsman in misfortune ! Especially might he have enlarged on the danger and apparent hopelessness of the attempt to rescue him. But it is a principal characteristic of faith to be careful for others more than for self. With a small band of followers he boldly pursued the forces of the victorious kings, and succeeded in recovering his brother’s son. Observe too his disinterested and princely spirit after the battle, in refusing part of the spoil. “I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet,” he said to the king of Sodom, “and I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.” Besides, this might be especially necessary to mark his abhorrence of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, and was a sort of protest against their sins. His conduct suggests a further remark :

He had been promised the land in which he now lived as a stranger ; he had valiant troops, though few in number, who doubtless, had he so desired, might have conquered for him a sufficient portion of it. But he did not attempt it : for he knew God could bring about his design and accomplish His promise in His own good time, without his use of unlawful means. Force of arms indeed would not have been unlawful, had God ordered their use, as afterwards when the Israelites returned from Egypt ; but it was unlawful without express command, and Abraham perhaps had to overcome a temptation in not having recourse to it. We have, in the after history, a similar instance of forbearance in the conduct of David towards Saul. David was promised the kingdom by God Himself ; Saul's life was more than once in his hands, but he thought not of the sin of doing him any harm. God could bring about His promise without his "doing evil that good might come." This is the true spirit of faith : to wait upon God, to watch for and to follow His guidance, not to attempt to go before Him.

But did Abraham return to his place without reward for his generous and self-denying conduct ? Far otherwise ; God mercifully renewed to him the pledge of His favour in answer to this new instance of his faith. As He had renewed the blessing when Lot at first chose the fruitful land, so He blessed him now by the mouth of a great priest and king. Lot went back to Sodom in silence ;—but God spoke to Abraham by Melchizedek. "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most High God ; and he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth," (who can give away kingdoms and countries as He will) "and blessed be the most High God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." Who Melchizedek was, is not told us ; Scripture speaks of him as a type of Christ ; but we cannot tell how far Abraham knew this, or what particular sanctity attached to his character, or what virtue to his blessing. But evidently it was a special mark of favour placed on Abraham ; and the bread and wine, brought forth as refreshment after the fight, had perhaps something of the nature of a sacrament, and conveyed the pledge of mercy.

3. Now let us pass to the concluding event of Lot's history. The gain of this world is but transitory ; faith reaps a late but lasting recompense. Soon the Angels of God descended to fulfil in one and the same mission a double purpose ;—to take from Lot his earthly portion, and to prepare for the accomplishment of the everlasting blessings promised to Abraham ; to destroy Sodom, while they foretold the approaching birth of Isaac.

The destruction of the guilty cities was at hand. "The Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me, and if not, I will know."* And now the greatest honour was put upon Abraham. God entrusted him with the knowledge of His secret purpose, and in so doing, made him a second time the deliverer of Lot from ruin; strongly marking the contrast between the two, in that the weak brother owed his safety to the intercession of him, who, enjoying God's favour, was content to be without earthly portion. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of Him." Accordingly Abraham was allowed to intercede for Sodom and all who were in it. I need scarcely go through this solemn narrative, which is doubtless well known to all of us. Abraham began with asking whether fifty righteous were not remaining in the city; he found himself obliged gradually to contract the supposed remnant of good men therein, till he came down to ten, but not even ten were found to delay God's vengeance. Here he ceased his intercession, perhaps in despair, and fearing to presume upon that adorable mercy, the depths of which he had tried, but had not ascertained. He did not mention Lot by name; still God understood and answered the unexpressed desire of his heart; for we are told presently, "It came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God *remembered Abraham*, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt."†

It was an eventide that two Angels came to Sodom, to rescue from it the only man (as it would seem) who had retained in his mind those instincts of right and wrong which are given us by nature, who continued to acknowledge the true God, had exercised himself in faith and obedience, and had not done despite to the gracious Spirit. Multitudes of children there doubtless were in that city untainted with actual sin; these were involved in their parents' ruin, as they are now-a-days in earthquakes, conflagrations, or shipwreck. But of those who could "discern between their right hand and their left," not ten (we know for certain), and (as it may be concluded) not one had righteousness

* Gen. xviii. 20, 21.

† Gen. xix. 29.

such as Lot's. "Old and young, all the people," "in every quarter," were corrupt before God, and therefore are "set forth for an example" of what the All-merciful God can do when sinners provoke Him to wrath. "We will destroy this place," the Angels said, "because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." "And when the morning arose the Angels hastened Lot . . . and brought him forth and set him without the city : and said "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."—Thus was Lot a second time warned and rescued ; whether he was brought thereby to a more consistent righteousness, or more enlightened faith, than before, we know not. What became of him after this event we know not ; of his subsequent life and death nothing is told us, the sacred record breaks off abruptly. This alone we know, that his posterity, the Moabites and Ammonites, were the enemies of the descendants of Abraham, his friend and kinsman, the favoured servant of God ; especially as seducing them to that idolatry and sensuality which the chosen family was set apart to withstand. Had not God in mercy confirmed to us, by the mouth of St. Peter, the saying of the wise man in the Apocrypha, that Lot was "righteous," we should have had cause to doubt whether he had not fallen away.

However, without forming harsh judgments concerning one whom Scripture thus honours, we may at least draw from his history a useful lesson for ourselves. Miserable will be the fate of the double-minded, of those who love this world so well that they will not give it up, though they believe and acknowledge that God bids them do so. Not that they confess to themselves that their hearts are set upon it ; they contrive to hide the fact from themselves by specious excuses, and consider themselves religious men. My brethren, do not take it for granted that your temper of mind is much superior to that which I have been describing and condemning ; nay, that it is not worse than it. You, indeed, are placed in an age of the world which is conspicuous for decency, and in which there are no temptations to the more hideous forms of sin, or rather much to deter from them. But answer this one question, and then decide whether this age does not follow Lot's pattern. It would appear that he thought more of the riches than of the sins of the cities of the plain. Now, as to the temper of this country, consider fairly, is there any place, any persons, any work, which our countrymen will not connect themselves with, in the way of trade or business ? For the sake of gain, do we not put aside all considerations of principle as unseasonable and almost absurd ? It is not possible to explain myself on this subject without entering into details too familiar for this

sacred place ; but try to follow out for yourselves what I suggest in general terms. Is there any speculation in commerce which religion is allowed to interfere with ? Whether Jew, Pagan, or Heretic, is to be our associate, does it frighten us ever so little ? Do we care what side of a quarrel, civil, political, or international, we take, so that we gain by it ? Do we not serve in war, do we not become debaters and advocates, do we not form associations and parties, with the supreme object of preserving property, or making it ? Do we not support religion for the sake of peace and good order ? Do we not measure its importance by its efficacy in securing these objects ? Do we not support it only so far as it secures them ? Do we not retrench all expenses of maintaining it which are not necessary for securing them ? Should we not feel very lukewarm towards the established religion, unless we thought the security of property bound up in its welfare ? Should we not easily resign ourselves to its overthrow, could it be proved to us that it endangered the State, involved the prospect of civil disturbances, or embarrassed the Government ? nay, could not we even consent to it, at the price of the reunion of all parties in the nation, the pacification of turbulent districts, and the establishment of our public credit ? Nay, further still, could we not easily persuade ourselves to support Anti-christ, I will not say at home, but at least abroad, rather than we should lose one portion of the freights which “ the ships of Tarshish ” bring us ? If this be the case in any good measure, how vain is it to shelter ourselves, as the manner of some is, under the notion that we are a moral, thoughtful, sober-minded, or religious people ! Lot is called a “ just man ” by St. Peter, he is referred to as “ hospitable ” by St. Paul ;* doubtless he was a confessor of the Truth among the wretched inhabitants of the cities in which he dwelt ; and the rays of light which those Apostles shed upon his history, are most cheering and acceptable, after reading the sad narrative of the Book of Genesis ; still, after all, who would willingly take on himself Lot’s sins, plain though it be that God had not deserted him ? Surely, if we are to be saved, it is not by keeping ourselves just above the line of reprobation, and living without any anxiety and struggle to serve God with a perfect heart. Surely, if Christians are to be saved, at least their righteousness must be far other than that which merely argued some remaining grace in one who was not a Christian. Surely, if Christians are to be saved, they must have carefully unlearned the love of this world’s pleasures, comforts, luxuries, honours. No one, surely, can really be a Christian, who makes his worldly interests his chief end of action. A man may be, in a

* 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Heb. xiii. 2.

measure, ill-tempered, resentful, proud, cruel, or sensual, and yet be a Christian. For passions belong to our inferior nature; they are irrational, rise spontaneously, are to be subdued by our governing principle, and (through God's grace) are ultimately, though gradually, subdued. But what shall be said when the reasoning and ruling faculty, the power that wills and controls, is turned earthward? "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"*

God only knows how far these remarks concern each of us. I will not dare to apply them to this man or that; but where I even might, I will rather turn away my mind from the subject. The thought is too serious, too dreadful to dwell upon. But you must do, my brethren, what I must not do. It is your duty to apply them to yourselves. Do not hesitate, as many of you as have never done so, to imagine the miserable and shocking possibility of your coming short of your hope, "having loved this present world." Retire into yourselves and imagine it; in the presence of Christ your Saviour, in that presence which at once will shame you, and will encourage you to hope for forgiveness, if you earnestly turn to Him to obtain it.†

SERMON II.

WILFULNESS OF ISRAEL IN REJECTING SAMUEL.

PSALM xli. 10.

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

It was a lesson continually set before the Israelites, that they were never to presume to act for themselves; but to wait till God wrought for them, to look on reverently, and then follow His guidance. God was their All-wise King; it was their duty to have no will of their own, distinct from His will, to form no plan of their own, to attempt no work of their own. "*Be still*, and know that I am God." Move not, speak not; look to the pillar of the cloud,—see how *it* moves,—then follow. Such was the command.

* Matt. vi. 23.

† Vide note A at the end of the volume.

For instance : when the Eyprians pursued the Israelites to the coast of the Red Sea, Moses said to the people, "Fear ye not, *stand still*, and see the salvation of the Lord ; the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." When they came to the borders of Canaan, and were frightened at the strength of its inhabitants, they were exhorted, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them, the Lord your God shall fight for you." To the same effect was the dying injunction of Joshua, "Be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left." And in a later age, when the Moabites and Ammonites made war against Jehoshaphat, the prophet Jahaziel was inspired to encourage the people in these words ; "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of their great multitude ; for the battle is not yours, but God's . . . Ye shall not need to fight in this battle : set yourselves, *stand ye still*, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem." Once more : When Israel and Syria came against Judah, the prophet Isaiah was directed to meet Ahaz and to say to him, "Take heed, and *be quiet* ; fear not, neither be faint-hearted ;"* Presumption, that is, the determination to act of themselves, or self-will, was placed in the number of the most heinous sins. "The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die, and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel."†

While however this entire surrender of themselves to their Almighty Creator was an especial duty enjoined on the chosen people, a deliberate and obstinate transgression of it is one of the especial characteristics of their history. They failed most conspicuously in that very point, in which obedience was most strictly enjoined upon them. They were not told never to act of themselves, and (as if out of mere perverseness) they were for ever acting of themselves ; and, if we look through the series of their punishments, we shall find them inflicted, not for mere indolent disobedience, or for frailty under temptation, but for deliberate, shameless presumption, running forward just in that very direction in which the Providence of God did *not* lead them, and from which it even prohibited them.

First, they made a molten image to worship ; and this just after receiving the command to make to themselves no emblems of the Divine Majesty, and while Moses was still in the mount. Then they would take to themselves a captain, and return to Egypt, instead of proceed-

* Ex. xiv. 13, 14. Deut. i. 29, 30. Josh. xxiii. 6. 2 Chron. xx. 15—17. Is. vii. 4.

† Deut. xvii. 12.

ing into the land of promise. When forbidden to go forward, then they at once attempted it. At last, when they had entered it, instead of following God's guidance, and destroying the guilty inhabitants, they adopted a plan of their own, and put their conquered enemies under tribute. Next followed their self-willed purpose of having a king like the nations around them.

It is observable moreover that they were the most perversely disobedient, at those times when Divine mercy had aided them in some remarkable way. For instance, in the life-time of Moses. Again, when Samuel was raised up to bring back the age of Moses, and to complete what he had begun, then they ran counter to God's design most signally; at the very time, I say, when God was visiting them in their low estate, and renewing His mercies, their very first act, on gaining a little strength and recovering from their despair, was to reject God's government over them, and ask a king like other nations.

This is the part of their history, to which I wish now particularly to draw your attention, the times of Samuel; the main circumstances to be considered being these,—the renewal of God's mercies to them after their backslidings,—His single demand in return, that they should submit themselves to His guidance,—and lastly, their plain refusal to do so, or rather their impetuous and deliberate movement in another direction.

When Moses was nigh his death, he foretold that a prophet was one day to arise like unto him in his place; a promise which was properly fulfilled in Christ's coming, but which had a prior accomplishment in the line of prophets from Samuel down to the captivity. A period however of four hundred years intervened between Moses' age and this first fulfilment of the prediction. The people were at first ruled by judges; at length, in the midst of the distress which their sins had brought upon them, when the Philistines had overrun the country, God visited them according to the promise. He raised up Samuel as His first prophet, and him not as a solitary messenger of His purposes, but as the first of many hundreds in succession.

Now let us consider the circumstances under which Samuel, the first of the prophets, was raised up. We shall find that his elevation was owing simply to God's will and power. He, like Moses, was not a warrior, yet by his prayers he saved his people from their enemies, and established them in a settled government. "Be still, and know that I am God:" the principle of this command had been illustrated in the giving of the Law, and now it was enforced in the beginning of the Prophetical Dispensation; as also in later ages, after the captivity, and

when Christ came, according to the words of Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."*

Observe, Samuel was born, in answer to his mother's earnest prayer for a son. Hannah, "in bitterness of soul, had prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore, and vowed a vow;" viz. that if God would give her a son, he should be dedicated to Him. This should be noticed; for Samuel was thus marked from his birth as altogether an instrument of the Lord's providing. A similar providence is observable in the case of other favoured objects and ministers of God's mercy, in order to show that that mercy is entirely of grace. Isaac was the child of divine power; so was John the Baptist; and Moses again was almost miraculously saved from the murderous Egyptians in his infancy.

According to his mother's vow, Samuel was taken into the service of the temple from his earliest years; and while yet a child was made the organ of God's sentence of evil upon Eli the high priest. God called him, in the sacred time between night and morning. "Samuel, Samuel," and denounced through him a judgment against Eli, for his sinful indulgence towards his sons. Here again was a lesson to the Israelites, how entirely the prophetic spirit, with which the nation was henceforth to be favoured, was from God. Had Samuel grown to manhood before he was inspired, it would not have clearly appeared how far the work was immediately divine; but when an untaught child was made to prophesy against Eli, the aged high priest, the people were reminded, as in the case of Moses, who was slow of speech, that it was the Lord who "made man's mouth, the dumb, or deaf, the seeing, or the blind;"† and that age and youth were the same with Him when His purposes required an instrument.

Samuel thus grew up to manhood, with the presages of greatness on him from the first. It is written, Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba," (i. e. from one end of the land to the other,) "knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord."‡

After this, when he was about thirty years old, the battle took place with the Philistines, in which thirty thousand Israelites fell. The ark of God was taken, and Eli, on hearing the news, fell from off his seat backward, and was killed. Thus Samuel was raised to the supreme power, in his country's greatest affliction. Still, even in his elevation, he was not allowed to do any great action himself. The ark of God

* Zech. iv. 6.

† Exodus iv. 11.

‡ 1 Sam. iii. 19—21.

was taken, yet he was not to rescue it. God so ordered it that His name "should be exalted among the heathen, and should be exalted in the earth."

The Philistines took the ark to Ashdod, and placed it in the temple of their idol, Dagon. Next morning, Dagon was found fallen on its face to the earth before it. They set it up again, and the next morning it was found broken into pieces;* and soon after the men of Ashdod and its neighbourhood were smitten with a divine judgment. In consequence, they resolved to rid themselves of what they rightly considered the cause of it, and transported the ark to Gath. The men of Gath were smitten with God's anger in their turn, and in their turn sent away the ark to Ekron. The Ekronites, in their terror, hardly suffered it to approach them. But the mysterious plague still attended it; and the Ekronites, as they had justly feared, were smitten with a "deadly destruction throughout all the city." The Philistines now determined to send their spoil, as they had at first fancied it, back to Israel; but, in order to try further, as it seems, the power of the God of Israel, they did as follows: They took two milch-kine, which had never been under the yoke, and shutting up their calves at home, harnessed them to the cart on which they had placed the ark. Should the kine, in spite of their natural affection for their young, go towards the Israelitish border, then, they argued, they might be sure that it was the God of Israel who had smitten them, in punishment for their capture of His holy habitation. It is written, "The kine took the straight way" towards the territory of Israel, "lowing as they went, and *turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.*"†

All this was a lesson to the Philistines; but the Israelites had yet theirs to learn. They had taken the ark to the battle, not in reverence, but as if it were a sort of a charm, with virtue in itself, and without any command from God, presumptuously. They were first punished by losing it. When they saw the ark returning to them, they rejoiced; and the Levites took it down and offered sacrifice. So far was well, but presently "the men of Bethshemesh . . . looked into it;" this evidenced a want of reverence towards God's sacred dwelling-place. And God "smote of the people fifty thousand three score and ten men and the people lamented," and said, "Who is able to stand before this Holy Lord God?"

Thus, when Almighty God, four hundred years after the age of Moses, again visited His people, He showed Himself in various ways to be the sole author of the blessings they received. The child Samuel, the ark of wood, the brute cattle,—these were the instruments through which

* 1 Sam. v. 3, 4.

† 1 Sam. vi. 12.

He manifested that He was a living God ; and having thus bared His mighty arm, and bid all men "be still, and know that He was God," then at length He sent His first prophet forward to teach and reclaim the people. "Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtarothe from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only : and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtarothe, and served the Lord only." The period during which this reformation was carried on seems to have been the greater part of twenty years, which was more or less a time of captivity. Towards the end of it, he gathered the Israelites together at Mizpeh, to hold a fast for their past sins ; and then "he judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh." This seems to imply a more open assumption of power than any he had been hitherto directed to make. In consequence, the Philistines were alarmed, thinking perhaps the subjugated people were on the point of recovering their independence ; and assembling their forces they marched against them. "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord, and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." The Philistines drew near to battle, while the sacrifice was offering ; "but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel. . . . Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." In this whole transaction the text is again illustrated. It is added, "So the Philistines were subdued, and came no more into the coast of Israel, and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which they had taken from Israel, were restored." "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life," making circuits year by year through the land.

And now we have arrived at the point in the history, which evidences, more than any other, the perverse ingratitude of the Israelites. Just when God had rescued them from their enemies, given them peace, and by a fresh act of bounty established the prophets in the land as ministers of His word and will, when the heavenly system was just coming into operation, this was the very time they chose to rebel and run counter to His purposes. They asked for themselves a king like the nations. The immediate occasion of this request was the faulty conduct of Samuel's sons, who assisted their father in his old age, "but walked not

in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.”* This, however, though doubtless a grievance, surely was no excuse for them. While the Lord was their king, no lasting harm could happen to them; yet even “the elders of Israel came to Samuel, and said unto him, Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” They added a reason which still more clearly evidenced their obstinate unbelief—“to judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” By what strange infatuation was it that they sought for a king to “*fight their battles*,” when through the whole course of Samuel’s government, it was so evident that God’s power alone had subdued their enemies? There was one additional aggravation of their sin; they had really been promised a king, at some future time undetermined, by Moses himself;† and hence, indeed, they probably defended their asking for one. But, in truth, that very circumstance gave to their self-will its distinctive mark already insisted on, viz. the desire of doing things their own way instead of waiting God’s time. The fact that God had promised what they clamoured for, and merely claimed to choose the time, surely ought to have satisfied them. But they were headstrong; and he answered them according to their wilfulness. He “gave them a king in His anger.” David, indeed, succeeded, but the corruption and degradation of the people quickly followed his death. The kingdom was divided into two; idolatry was introduced; and at length captivity came upon them, the loss of their country, and the dispersion, or rather annihilation of the greater part of the tribes.

In conclusion, I will make one remark by way of applying their history to ourselves at this day. Certainly we have not, at the present time, learned the duty of waiting and being still. Great perils, just now, encompass our branch of the Church: here the question comes upon us, as a body and as individuals, what ought we to do? Doubtless to meet them with all the wisdom and prudence in our power, to use all allowable means to avert them; but, after all, is not our main duty this; to go on quietly and steadfastly in our old ways, as if nothing was the matter? “When Daniel knew that the writing was signed,” which condemned him to the lion’s den, if he did what was his plain duty, he did not look about to see whether he might not lawfully suspend it for a time, or whether there were not other ways of serving God not interdicted by the civil power, “but he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”‡ It is a very painful subject, but it is not

* 1 Sam. viii. 3.

† Deut. xvii. 14—20.

‡ Dan. vi. 10.

right to shut our eyes to the fact, that friends of the Church are far more disposed to look out for secular and unauthorized ways of defending her than to proceed quietly in their ordinary duties, and trust to God to save her. What is the use of these feverish exertions, on all sides of us, to soothe our enemies, conciliate the suspicious or wavering, and attach to us men of name and power? Rather let our resolve be, if we are to perish, it shall be at our post of duty. We will be found in the circle of our sacred services, in prayer and praise, in fasting and alms-doing, "in quietness and confidence." All the great deliverances of the Church have been thus gained. Israel stood still, and saw the Egyptians overwhelmed in the sea. Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and prayed to Him who dwelt between the Cherubim, and Sennacherib's army was destroyed. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for" St. Peter, and the Apostle was delivered out of prison by an Angel. The course of Providence is not materially different now. God's arm is not shortened, nay, nor so restrained that He cannot save without miracles as well as with them. He can save silently and suddenly, while things seem to go on as usual. The hearts of all are in His hand, the issues of life and death, the rise and fall of mighty men, and the distribution of gifts. Why then should we fear, or cast about for means of defence, who have the Lord for our God? He may indeed, if it so happen, make us His instruments, He may put arms into our hands; but even if He gives us no tokens what He is meditating, what then? At length our deliverance will come when we expect it not; whereas we shall lose our own hope, and disorder the Church greatly, if we presume to form plans of our own by way of protecting it. Jeroboam thought he acted "wisely" when he set up the calves of gold at Dan and Bethel. Our wisdom is like his, if we venture to relax one jot or tittle of Christ's perfect law, one article of the Creed, one holy ordinance, one ancient usage, with the hope of placing ourselves on a more advantageous or less irksome position. "Our strength is to sit still;" and till we learn this far more than we seem at present to understand it, surely the hopes of the true Israel among us must be low, and with prayers for the Church's safety they will have to mingle confessions and intercessions in behalf of those who believe themselves its prudent friends and effective defenders, and are not.

SERMON III.

SAUL.

HOSEA xiii. 11.

I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath.

THE Israelites seem to have asked for a king from an unthankful caprice and waywardness. The ill conduct indeed of Samuel's sons was the occasion of the sin, but "an evil heart of unbelief," to use Scripture language, was the real cause of it. They had ever been restless and dissatisfied, asking for flesh when they had manna, fretful for water, impatient of the wilderness, bent on returning to Egypt, fearing their enemies, murmuring against Moses. They had miracles even to satiety; and then for a change they wished a king like the nations. This was the chief reason of their sinful demand. And further, they were dazzled with the pomp and splendour of the heathen monarchs around them, and they desired some one to fight their battles, some visible succour to depend on, instead of having to wait for an invisible Providence, which came in its own way and time, by little and little, being dispensed silently, or tardily, or (as they might consider) unsuitably. Their carnal hearts did not love the neighbourhood of heaven; and, like the inhabitants of Gadara afterwards, they prayed that Almighty God would depart from their coasts.

Such were some of the feelings under which they desired a king like the nations; and God at length granted their request. To punish them, He gave them a king *after their own heart*, Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; of whom the text speaks in these terms, "I gave them a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath."

There is in true religion a sameness, and absence of hue and brilliancy in the eyes of the natural man; a plainness, austereness, and (what he considers) sadness. It is like the heavenly manna, of which the Israelites complained, insipid and at length wearisome, "like wafers made with honey." They complained that "their soul was dried away:" "There is nothing at all," they said, "besides this manna.

before our eyes. . . . We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.* Such were the dainty meats in which their soul delighted; and for the same reason they desired a king. Samuel had too much of primitive simplicity about him to please them, they felt they were behind the world, and clamoured to be put on a level with the heathen.

Saul, the king whom God gave them, had much to recommend him to minds thus greedy of the dust of the earth. He was brave, daring, resolute; gifted too with strength of body as well as of mind,—a circumstance which seems to have attracted their admiration. He is described in person as if one of those sons of Anak, before whose giant forms the spies of the Israelites in the wilderness were as grasshoppers,—“a choice young man and a goodly, there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.”† Both his virtues and his faults were such as became an eastern monarch, and were adapted to secure the fear and submission of his subjects. Pride, haughtiness, obstinacy, reserve, jealousy, caprice,—these in their way were not unbecoming qualities in the king after whom their imaginations roved. On the other hand, the better parts of his character were of an excellence sufficient to engage the affection of Samuel himself.

As to Samuel, his conduct is far above human praise. Though injuriously treated by his countrymen, who cast him off after he had served them faithfully till he was “old and grey-headed,”‡ and who resolved on setting over themselves a king against his earnest entreaties; yet we find no trace of coldness or jealousy in his behaviour towards Saul. On his first meeting with him he addressed him in the words of loyalty,—“On whom is all the desire of Israel? is it not on thee, and on all thy father’s house?” Afterwards, when he anointed him king, he “kissed him and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance?” When he announced him to the people as their king, he said, “See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people.” And, some time after, when Saul had irrecoverably lost God’s favour, we are told, “Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death, *nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul.*” In the next chapter he is even rebuked for immoderate grief,—“How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel.”§ Such

* Exod. xvi. Numb. xi. 5. † 1 Sam. ix. 2.—vide 1 Sam. x. 23. ‡ 1 Sam. xii. 2.

§ 1 Sam. ix. 20. x. 1. 24. xv. 35. xvi. 1.

sorrow speaks favourably for Saul as well as for Samuel ; it is not only the grief of a loyal subject and a zealous prophet, but, moreover, of an attached friend ; and, indeed, instances are recorded, in the first years of his reign, of forbearance, generosity, and neglect of self, which sufficiently account for the feelings with which Samuel regarded him. David, under very different circumstances, seems to have felt for him a similar affection.

The higher points of his character are brought out in instances such as the following :—The first announcement of his elevation came upon him suddenly ; but apparently without unsettling him. He kept it secret, leaving it to Samuel, who had made it to him, to publish it. “Saul said unto his uncle, He” (that is, Samuel) “told us plainly that the asses were found ; but of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, *he told him not.*” Nay, it would even seem, he was averse to the dignity intended for him ; for when the divine lot fell upon him, he hid himself, and was not discovered by the people without recourse to divine assistance. The appointment was at first unpopular : “the children of Belial said, how shall this man save us ? They despised him, and brought him no presents ; *but he held his peace.*” Soon the Ammonites invaded the country beyond Jordan, with the avowed intention of subjugating it. They sent to Saul for relief almost in despair ; and the panic spread in the interior as well as among those whose country was immediately threatened. The sacred writer proceeds ; “*Behold Saul came after the herd out of the field ;* and Saul said, what aileth the people that they weep ? and they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and his anger was kindled greatly.” His order for an immediate gathering throughout Israel was obeyed with the alacrity with which the multitude serve the strong-minded in times of danger. A decisive victory over the enemy followed : then the popular cry became, “Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us ? bring the men, that we may put them to death. And Saul said, *There shall not a man be put to death this day ;* for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel.”*

Thus personally qualified, Saul was moreover a prosperous king. He had been appointed to subdue the enemies of Israel, and success attended his arms. At the end of the fourteenth chapter we read, “So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philis-

* 1 Sam. x. xi.

tines, and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them."

Such was Saul's character and success; his character faulty, yet not without promise, his success in arms as great as his carnal subjects could have desired. Yet in spite of Samuel's private liking for him, and in spite of the good fortune which actually attended him, we find that from the beginning the Prophet's voice is raised both against people and king in warnings and rebukes, which are omens of his destined destruction; according to the text, "I gave them a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath." At the very time that Saul was publicly received as king, Samuel protested, "Ye have this day rejected your God, who Himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations."* In a subsequent assembly of the people, in which he testified his uprightness, he says, "Is it not wheat-harvest to-day? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain, that ye *may perceive and see that your wickedness is great*, in asking you a king." Again, "If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."† And after this, on the first instance of disobedience, and at first sight no very heinous sin, the sentence of rejection is passed upon him: "Thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart."‡

Here then a question may be raised:—why was Saul thus marked for vengeance from the beginning? Why these presages of misfortune, which from the first hung over him, gathered, fell in storm and tempest, and at length overwhelmed him? Is his character so essentially faulty that it must be thus distinguished for reprobation above all the anointed kings after him? Why, while David is called a man after God's own heart, should Saul be put aside as worthless?

This question leads us to a deeper inspection of his character. Now, we know, the first duty of every man is the fear of God,—a reverence for His word, a love towards Him, a desire to obey Him; and, besides, it was peculiarly incumbent on the king of Israel, as God's vicegerent, by virtue of his office, to promote His glory, whom his subjects had rejected.

Now Saul "lacked this one thing." His character indeed is obscure, and we must be cautious while considering it; still, as Scripture is given us for our instruction it is surely right to make the most of what we find there, and to form our judgment by such lights as we possess. It would appear then, that Saul was never under the abiding influence

* 1 Sam. x. 19.

† 1 Sam. xii. 17. 25.

‡ Ibid. xiii. 14.

of religion, or, in Scripture language "the fear of God," however he might be at times moved and softened. Some men are inconsistent in their conduct, as Samson; or as Eli, in a different way; and yet may have lived by faith, though a weak faith. Others have sudden falls, as David had. Others are corrupted by prosperity, as Solomon. But as to Saul, there is no proof that he had any deep-seated religious principle at all; rather it is to be feared that his history is a lesson to us, that the "heart of unbelief" may exist in the very sight of God, may rule a man in spite of many natural advantages of character, in the midst of much that is virtuous, amiable, and commendable.

Saul, it would seem, was naturally brave, active, generous and patient; and what nature made him, such he remained, that is, without improvement: with virtues which had no value, because they required no effort, and implied the influence of no principle. On the other hand, when we look for evidence of his faith, that is, his practical sense of things unseen, we discover instead a deadness to all considerations not connected with the present world. It is his habit to treat prophet and priest with a coldness, to say the least, which seems to argue some great internal defect. It would not be inconsistent with the Scripture account of him, even should the real fact be, that (with some general notions concerning the being and providence of God) he doubted of the divinity of the Dispensation, of which he was an instrument. The circumstance which first introduces him to the inspired history is not in his favour. While in search of his father's asses, which were lost, he came to the city where Samuel was; and though Samuel was now an old man, and from childhood known as the especial minister and prophet of the God of Israel, Saul seems to have considered him as a mere diviner, such as might be found among the heathen, who, for "the fourth part of a shekel of silver," would tell him his way.

The narrative goes on to mention, that after his leaving Samuel, "God gave him another heart," and on meeting a company of prophets, "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them." Upon this, "all that knew him beforetime" said, "What is this that is come unto the son of Kish: is Saul also among the prophets? . . . therefore it became a proverb." From this narrative we gather, that his carelessness and coldness in religious matters were so notorious, that, in the eyes of his acquaintance, there was a certain strangeness and incongruity which at once struck the mind, in associating him with a school of the prophets.

Nor have we any reason to believe, from the after history, that the divine gift, then first imparted, left any religious effect upon his mind. At a later period of his life we find him suddenly brought under the

same sacred influence on his entering the school where Samuel taught ; but, instead of softening him, its effect upon his outward conduct did but testify the fruitlessness of divine grace when acting upon a will obstinately set upon evil.

The immediate occasion of his rejection was his failing under a specific trial of his obedience, set before him at the very time he was anointed. He had collected with difficulty an army against the Philistines : while waiting for Samuel to offer the sacrifice, his people became dispirited, and began to fall off and return home. Here he was doubtless exposed to the temptation of taking unlawful measures to put a stop to their defection. But when we consider that the act to which he was persuaded was no less than that of his offering sacrifice, he being neither priest nor prophet, nor having any commission thus to interfere with the Mosaic ritual, it is plain "*his forcing himself*" to do so (as he tenderly described his sin) was a direct profaneness,—a profaneness which implied that he was careless about forms, which in this world will ever be essential to things supernatural, and thought it mattered little whether he acted in God's way or in his own.

After this, he seems to have separated himself from Samuel, whom he found unwilling to become his instrument, and to have had recourse to the priesthood instead. Ahijah or Ahimeleck (as he is afterwards called,) the high priest, followed his camp ; and the ark too, in spite of the warning conveyed by the disasters which attended the presumptuous use of it in the time of Eli. "And Saul said unto Ahijah, Bring hither the ark of God ;" while it was brought, a tumult which was heard in the camp of the Philistines, increased. On this interruption Saul irreverently put the ark aside, and went out to the battle.

It will be observed, that there was no professed or intentional irreverence in Saul's conduct ; he was still on the whole the same he had ever been. He outwardly respected the Mosaic ritual,—about this time he built his first altar to the Lord,* and in a certain sense seemed to acknowledge God's authority. But nothing shows he considered there was any vast distinction between Israel and the nations around them. He was *indifferent*, and cared for none of these things. The chosen people desired a king like the nations, and such a one they received.

After this he was commanded to "go and smite the sinners, the Amalekites, and utterly destroy them and their cattle." This was a judgment on them which God had long decreed, though He had delayed it ; and He now made Saul the minister of His vengeance. But Saul per-

* 1 Sam. xiv. 35.

formed it so far only as fell in with his own inclination and purposes. He smote, indeed, the Amalekites, and "destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword,"—this exploit had its glory; the best of the flocks and herds he spared, and why? to sacrifice therewith to the Lord. But since God had expressly told him to destroy them, what was this but to imply, that Divine intimations had nothing to do with such matters? what was it but to consider that the established religion was but a useful institution, or a splendid pageant suitable to the dignity of monarchy, but resting on no unseen supernatural sanction? Certainly he in no sense acted in the fear of God, with the wish to please Him, and the conviction that he was in His sight. One might consider it mere pride and wilfulness in him, acting in his own way because it was his own, (which doubtless it was in great measure,) except that he appears to have had an eye to the feelings and opinions of men as to his conduct, though not to God's judgment. He "feared the people and obeyed their voice." Again, he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Doubtless he considered Agag as "his brother," as Ahab afterwards called Ben-hadad. Agag was a king, and Saul observed towards him that courtesy and clemency which earthly monarchs observe one towards another, and rightly, when no divine command comes in the way. But the God of Israel required a king after His own heart, jealous of idolatry; the people had desired a king like the nations around them.

It is remarkable, moreover, that, while he spared Agag, he attempted to exterminate the Gibeonites with the sword, who were tolerated in Israel by virtue of an oath taken in their favour by Joshua and "the princes of the congregation." This he did "*in his zeal* to the children of Israel and Judah."*

From the time of his disobedience in the matter of Amalek, Samuel came no more to see Saul, whose season of probation was over. The evil spirit exerted a more visible influence upon him; and God sent Samuel to anoint David privately, as the future king of Israel. I need not trace further the course of moral degradation which is exemplified in Saul's subsequent history. Mere natural virtue wears away, when men neglect to deepen it into religious principle. Saul appears in his youth to be unassuming and forbearing; in advanced life he is not only proud and gloomy, (as he ever was in a degree,) but cruel, resentful, and hard-hearted, which he was not in his youth. His injurious treatment of David is a long history; but his conduct to Ahimelech, the high-priest, admits of being mentioned here. Ahimelech assisted David in

* Josh. ix. 2. 2 Sam. xxi. 1—5.

his escape. Saul resolved on the death of Ahimelech and all his father's house.* On his guards refusing to execute his command, Doeg, a man of Edom, one of the nations Saul was raised up to withstand, undertook the atrocious deed. On that day eighty-five priests were slain. Afterwards Nob, the city of the priests, was smitten with the edge of the sword, and all destroyed, "men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep." That is, Saul executed more complete vengeance on the descendants of Levi, the sacred tribe, than on the sinners, the Amalekites, who laid wait for Israel in the way, on their going up from Egypt.

Last of all, he finishes his bad history by an open act of apostacy from the God of Israel. His last act is like his first, but more significant. He began, as we saw, by consulting Samuel as a diviner; this showed the direction of his mind. It steadily persevered in its evil way,—and he ends by consulting a professed sorceress at Endor. The Philistines had assembled their hosts; Saul's heart trembled greatly—he had no advisers or comforters;—Samuel was dead,—the priests he had himself slain with the sword. He hoped, by magic rites, which he had formerly denounced, to foresee the issue of the approaching battle. God meets him even in the cave of satanic delusions,—but as an Antagonist. The reprobate king receives, by the mouth of dead Samuel, who had once anointed him, the news that he is to be "taken away in God's wrath,"—that the Lord would deliver Israel, with him, into the hands of the Philistines, and that on the morrow he and his sons should be numbered with the dead.†

The next day "the battle went sore against him, the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers."‡ "Anguish came upon him,"|| and he feared to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised. He desired his armour-bearer to draw his sword and thrust him through therewith. On his refusing, he fell upon his own sword, and so came to his end.

Unbelief and wilfulness are the wretched characteristics of Saul's history,—an ear deaf to the plainest commands, a heart hardened against the most gracious influences. Do not suppose, my brethren, because I speak thus strongly, I consider Saul's state of mind to be something very unusual. God forbid it should exist in its full misery any where among us! but surely there is not any one soul here present but what may trace in itself the elements of sins like his. Let us only reflect on our hardness of heart when attending religious ordinances, and we

* 1 Sam. xxii. 16. † 1 Sam. xxviii. 19. ‡ 1 Sam. xxxi. 3. § 2 Sam. i. 9.

shall understand something of Saul's condition when he prophesied. We may be conscious to ourselves of the truth of things sacred as entirely as if we saw them ; we may have no misgivings about the presence of God in Church, or about the grace of the Sacraments, and yet we often feel in as ordinary and as unconcerned a mood as if we were altogether unbelievers. Again, let us reflect on our callousness after mercies received, or after suffering. We are often in worse case even than this ; for to realize the unseen world in our imagination, and feel as if we saw it, may not always be in our power. But what shall be said to wilful transgression of God's commandments, such as most of us, I fear, must recollect in ourselves, even as children, when our hearts were most tender, when we least doubted about religion, were least perplexed in matters of duty, and had all the while a full consciousness of what we were doing ? What, again, shall be said to those, perhaps not few in number, who sin with the purpose beforehand of repenting afterwards ?

What makes our insensibility still more alarming is, that it follows the grant of the highest privileges. Saul was hardened after the Spirit of God had come on him ; ours is a sin after Baptism. There is something awful in this, if we understood it ; as if that peculiar hardness of heart which we experience, in spite of whatever excellences of character we may otherwise possess, like Saul,—in spite of the benevolence, or fairness, or candour, or consideration, which are the virtues of this age,—was the characteristic of a soul transgressing after it had “tasted the powers of the world to come,” and an earnest of the second death. May this thought, through God's mercy, rouse us to a deeper seriousness than we have at present, while Christ still continues to intercede for us, and grants us time for repentance !

SERMON IV.

EARLY YEARS OF DAVID.

SAMUEL xvi. 18.

Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.

SUCH is the account given to Saul, of David, in many respects the most favoured of the ancient Saints. David is to be accounted the most favoured, first as being the principal type of Christ, next as being the author of great part of the book of Psalms, which have been used as the Church's form of devotion ever since his time. Besides, he was a chief instrument of God's providence, both in repressing idolatry and in preparing for the Gospel; and he prophesied in an especial manner of that Saviour whom he prefigured and preceded. Moreover, he was the chosen king of Israel, a man after God's own heart, and blessed, not only in himself, but in his seed after him. And, further, to the history of his life a greater share is given of the inspired pages than to that of any other of God's favoured servants. Lastly, he displays in his personal character that very temper of mind in which his nation, or rather human nature itself, is especially deficient. Pride and unbelief disgrace the history of the chosen people; the deliberate love of this world, which was the sin of Balaam, and the presumptuous wilfulness which is exhibited in Saul. But David is conspicuous for an affectionate, a thankful, a loyal heart towards his God and Defender, a zeal which was as fervent and as docile as Saul was sullen, and as keen-sighted and as pure as Balaam was selfish and double-minded. Such was the son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite; he stands midway between Abraham and his predicted seed, Judah and the Shiloh, receiving and transmitting the promises; a figure of the Christ, and an inspired Prophet, living in the Church even to the end of time, in his office, his history, and his sacred writings.

Some remarks on his early life, and on his character, as therein displayed, may profitably engage our attention at the present time.

When Saul was finally rejected for not destroying the Amalekites, Samuel was bid go to Bethlehem, and anoint, as future king of Israel, one of the sons of Jesse, who should be pointed out to him when he was come there. Samuel accordingly went thither and made a sacrifice; when, at his command, Jesse's seven sons were brought by their father, one by one, before the Prophet; but none of them proved to be the choice of Almighty God. David was the youngest and out of the way, and it seemed to Jesse as unlikely that God's choice should fall upon him, as it appeared to Joseph's brethren and to his father, that he and his mother and brethren should, as his dreams foretold, bow down before him. On Samuel's inquiring, Jesse said, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep." On Samuel's bidding, he was sent for. "Now he was ruddy," the sacred historian proceeds, "and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to: And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he." After Samuel had anointed him, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." It is added, "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul."

David's anointing was followed by no other immediate mark of God's favour. He was tried by being sent back again, in spite of the promise, to the care of his sheep, till an unexpected occasion introduced him to Saul's court. The withdrawing of the Spirit of the Lord from Saul was followed by frequent attacks from an evil spirit, as a judgment upon him. His mind was depressed, and a "trouble," as it is called, came upon him, with symptoms very like those which we now refer to derangement. His servants thought that music, such perhaps as was used in the schools of the Prophets, might soothe and restore him; and David was recommended by one of them for that purpose, in the words of the text: "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him."

David came in the power of that sacred influence whom Saul had grieved and rejected. The Spirit which inspired his tongue guided his hand also, and his sacred songs became a medicine to Saul's diseased mind. "When the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, . . . David took an harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Thus he is first introduced to us in that character in which he still has praise in the Church,

as "the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel."*

Saul "loved David greatly, and he became his armour-bearer;" but the first trial of his humility and patience was not over, while many other trials were in store. After a while he was a second time sent back to his sheep; and though there was war with the Philistines, and his three eldest brethren were in the army with Saul, and he had already essayed his strength in defending his father's flocks from wild beasts, and was a "mighty valiant man," yet he contentedly stayed at home as a private person, keeping his promise of greatness to himself, till his father bade him go to his brethren to take them a present from him, and report how they fared. An accident, as it appeared to the world, brought him forward. On his arrival at the army, he heard the challenge of the Philistine champion, Goliath of Gath. I need not relate how he was divinely urged to engage the giant, how he killed him, and how he was in consequence again raised to Saul's favour; who, with an infirmity not inconsistent with the deranged state of his mind, seems to have altogether forgotten him.

From this time began David's public life; but not yet the fulfilment of the promise made to him by Samuel. He had a second and severer trial of patience to endure for many years; the trial of "being still" and doing nothing before God's time, though he had (apparently) the means in his hands of accomplishing the promise for himself. It was to this trial that Jeroboam afterwards showed himself unequal. He too was promised a kingdom, but he was tempted to seize upon it in his own way, and so forfeited God's protection.

David's victory over Goliath so endeared him to Saul, that he would not let him go back to his father's house. Jonathan too, Saul's son, at once felt for him a warm affection, which deepened into a firm friendship. "Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants."† This prosperous fortune, however, did not long continue. As Saul passed through the cities from his victory over his enemies, the women of Israel came out to meet him, singing and dancing, and they said, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Immediately the jealous king was "very wroth, and the saying displeased him;" his sullenness returned; he feared David as a rival; and "eyed him from that day and forward." On the morrow, as David was playing before him, as at other times, Saul threw his javelin at him. After this, Saul displaced him from his situation at his court, and sent him to the war, hoping so

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

† 1 Sam. xviii. 5.

to rid himself of him by his falling in battle ; but by God's blessing David returned victorious.

In a second war with the Philistines, David was successful as before ; and Saul, overcome with gloomy and malevolent passions, again cast at him with his javelin, as he played before him, with the hope of killing him.

This repeated attempt on his life drove David from Saul's court ; and for some years after, that is, till Saul's death, he was a wanderer upon the earth, persecuted in that country which was afterwards to be his own kingdom. Here, as in his victory over Goliath, Almighty God purposed to show us, that it was *His* hand which set David on the throne of Israel. David conquered his enemy by a sling and stone, in order, as he said at the time, that all . . . might know "that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear ; for the battle is the Lord's."* Now again, but in a different way, His guiding providence was displayed. As David slew Goliath without arms, so now he refrained himself and used them not, though he possessed them. Like Abraham he traversed the land of promise "as a strange land,"† waiting for God's good time. Nay, far more exactly, even than to Abraham, was it given to David to act and suffer that life of faith which the Apostle describes, and by which "the elders obtained a good report." By faith he wandered about "being destitute, afflicted, evil-entreated, in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." On the other hand, through the same faith, he "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

On escaping from Saul, he first went to Samuel to ask his advice. With him he dwelt some time. Driven thence by Saul, he went to Bethlehem, his father's city, then to Ahimelech the high-priest, at Nob. Thence he fled, still through fear of Saul, to Achish, the Philistine king of Gath ; and finding his life in danger there, he escaped to Adullam, where he was joined by his kindred, and put himself at the head of an irregular band of men, such as, in the unsettled state of the country, might be usefully and lawfully employed against the remnant of the heathen. After this he was driven to Hareth, to Keilah which he rescued from the Philistines, to the wilderness of Ziph among the mountains, to the wilderness of Maon, to the strong-holds of Engedi, to the wilderness of Paran. After a time he again betook himself to Achish, king of Gath, who gave him a city; and there it was that the news was brought him of the death of Saul in battle, which was the occasion of

* 1 Sam. xvii. 47.

† Heb. xi. 9.

his elevation first to the throne of Judah, afterwards to that of all Israel, according to the promise of God made to him by Samuel.

It need not be denied that, during these years of wandering, we find in David's conduct instances of infirmity and inconsistency, and some things which, without being clearly wrong, are yet strange and startling in so favoured a servant of God. With these we are not concerned, except so far as a lesson may be gained from them for themselves. We are not at all concerned with them as regards our estimate of David's character. That character is ascertained and sealed by the plain word of Scripture, by the praise of Almighty God, and is no subject for our criticism; and if we find in it traits which we cannot fully reconcile with the approbation divinely given to him, we must take it in faith to be what it is said to be, and wait for the future revelations of Him who "overcomes when He is judged." Therefore I dismiss these matters now, when I am engaged in exhibiting the eminent obedience and manifold virtues of David. On the whole, his situation, during these years of trial, was certainly that of a witness for Almighty God, one who does good and suffers for it, nay, suffers on rather than rid himself from suffering by any unlawful act.

Now then let us consider what was, as far as we can understand, his especial grace, what is his gift; as faith was Abraham's distinguishing virtue, meekness the excellence of Moses, self-mastery the gift especially conspicuous in Joseph.

This question may best be answered by considering the purpose for which he was raised up. When Saul was disobedient, Samuel said to him, "Thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him *a man after His own heart*, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."* The office to which first Saul and then David were called, was different from that with which other favoured men before them had been entrusted. From the time of Moses, when Israel became a nation, God had been the king of Israel, and His chosen servants, not delegates, but mere organs of His will. Moses did not direct the Israelites by his own wisdom, but he spake to them, as God spake from the pillar of the cloud. Joshua, again, was merely a sword in the hand of God. Samuel was but His minister and interpreter. God acted, the Israelites "stood still and saw" His miracles, then followed. But, when they had rejected Him from being king over them, then their chief ruler was no longer a mere organ of His power and will, but had a certain authority entrusted to him, more or less inde-

* 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

pendent of supernatural direction ; and acted, not so much *from* God, as *for* God, and *in the place of* God. David, when taken from the sheepfolds “to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance,” “fed them,” in the words of the Psalm, “with a faithful and true heart; and ruled them prudently with all his power.”* From this account of his office, it is obvious that his very first duty was that of *fidelity to Almighty God* in the trust committed to him. He had power put into his hands, in a sense which neither Moses had it, nor Samuel. He was charged with a certain office, which he was bound to administer according to his ability, so as best to promote the interests of Him who appointed him. Saul had neglected his Master’s honour ; but David, in this an eminent type of Christ, “came to do God’s will” as a viceroy in Israel, and, as being tried and found faithful, he is especially called “a man after God’s own heart.”

David’s peculiar excellence then is that of *fidelity to the trust committed to him* ; a firm uncompromising single-hearted devotion to the cause of his God, and a burning zeal for His honour.

This characteristic virtue is especially illustrated in the early years of his life which have engaged our attention. He was tried therein and found faithful ; before he was put in power, it was proved whether he could obey. Till he came to the throne, he was like Moses or Samuel, an instrument in God’s hands, bid do what was told him and nothing more ;—having borne this trial of obedience well, in which Saul had failed, then at length he was intrusted with a sort of discretionary power, to use in his Master’s service.

Observe how David was tried, and what various high qualities of mind he displayed in the course of the trial. First, the promise of greatness was given him and Samuel anointed him. Still he stayed in the sheep-folds ; and though called away by Saul for a time, yet returned contentedly when Saul released him from attendance. How difficult it is for such as know they have gifts suitable to the Church’s need to refrain themselves, till God makes a way for their use ! and the trial would be the more severe in David’s case, in proportion to the ardour and energy of his mind ; yet he fainted not under it. Afterwards for seven years, as the time appears to be, he withstood the strong temptation, ever before his eyes, of acting without God’s guidance, when he had the means of doing so. Though skilful in arms, popular with his countrymen, successful against the enemy, the king’s son-in-law, and on the other hand grievously injured by Saul, who not only continually sought his life, but even suggested to him a traitor’s conduct by ac-

* Ps. lxxviii. 71—73.

cusing him of treason, and whose life was several times in his hands yet he kept his honour pure and unimpeachable. He feared God and honoured the king ; and this at a time of life especially exposed to the temptations of ambition.

There is a resemblance between the early history of David and that of Joseph. Both distinguished for piety in youth, the youngest and the despised of their respective brethren, they are raised, 'after a long trial, to a high station, as ministers of God's Providence. Joseph was tempted to a degrading adultery ; David was tempted by ambition. Both were tempted to be traitors to their masters and benefactors. Joseph's trial was brief ; but his conduct under it evidenced settled habits of virtue which he could call to his aid at a moment's notice. A long imprisonment followed, the consequence of his obedience, and borne with meekness and patience ; but it was no part of his temptation, because, when once incurred, release was out of his power. David's trial, on the other hand, lasted for years, and grew stronger as time went on. His master too, far from "putting all that he had into his hand,"* sought his life. Continual opportunity of avenging himself incited his passions ; self-defence, and the divine promise, were specious arguments to seduce his reason. Yet he mastered his heart,—he was "still ;"—he kept his hands clean and his lips guileless,—he was loyal throughout,—and in due time inherited the promise.

Let us call to mind some of the circumstances of his steadfastness recorded in the history.

He was about twenty-three years old when he slew the Philistine ; yet, when placed over Saul's men of war, in the first transport of his victory, we are told he "behaved himself wisely."† When fortune turned, and Saul became jealous of him, still "David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him." How like is this to Joseph under different circumstances ! "Wherefore, when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely he was afraid of him ; and all Israel and Judah loved David." Again, "And David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was much set by." Here in shifting fortunes is evidence of that staid, composed frame of mind in his youth, which he himself describes in the one hundred and thirty-first Psalm. "My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty . . . Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother."

The same modest deportment marks his subsequent conduct. He consistently seeks counsel of God. When he fled from Saul he went

* Genesis xix. 4.

† 1 Sam. xviii. 3—32.

to Samuel; afterwards we find him following the directions of the prophet Gad, and afterwards of Abiathar the high priest.* Here his character is in full contrast to the character of Saul.

Further, consider his behaviour towards Saul, when he had him in his power; it displays a most striking and admirable union of simple faith and unblemished loyalty.

Saul, while in pursuit of him, went into a cave in Engedi. David surprised him there, and his companions advised to seize him, if not to take his life. They said, "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee."† David, in order to show Saul how entirely his life had been in his power, arose and cut off a part of his robe privately. After he had done it, his "heart smote him" even for this slight freedom, as if it were a disrespect offered towards his king and father. "He said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." When Saul left the cave, David followed him and cried, "My Lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself." He hoped that he could now convince Saul of his integrity "Wherefore hearest thou men's words," he asked, "saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee Moreover, my father, see, yea see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see, that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee: yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. The Lord therefore judge . . . and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand." Saul was for the time overcome; he said, "Is this thy voice, my Son David? and Saul lifted up his voice and wept." And he said, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." He added, "And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king." At another time David surprised Saul in the midst of his camp, and his companion would have killed him; but he said, "Destroy him not, for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?"‡ Then, as he stood over him, he meditated sorrowfully on his master's future fortunes, while he himself

* Ibid. xxii. 5. 20. xxiii. 6.
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† 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. ‡ 1 Sam. xxvi. 9.

refrained from interfering with God's purposes. "Surely the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish." David retired from the enemy's camp; and when at a safe distance, roused Saul's guards, and blamed them for their negligent watch, which had allowed a stranger to approach the person of their king. Saul was moved the second time; the miserable man, as if waking from a dream which hung about him, said, "I have sinned; return, my son David behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." He added, truth overcoming him, "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail.

How beautiful are these passages in the history of the chosen king of Israel! How do they draw our hearts towards Him, as one whom in his private character it must have been an extreme privilege and a great delight to know! Surely the blessings of the patriarchs descended in a united flood upon "the lion of the tribe of Judah," the type of the true Redeemer who was to come. He inherits the prompt faith and magnanimity of Abraham; he is simple as Isaac; he is humble as Jacob; he has the youthful wisdom and self-possession, the tenderness, the affectionateness, and the firmness of Joseph. And, as his own especial gift, he has an overflowing thankfulness, an ever-burning devotion, a zealous fidelity to his God, a high unshaken loyalty towards his king, a heroic bearing in all circumstances, such as the multitude of men see to be great, but cannot understand. Be it our blessedness, unless the wish be presumptuous, so to acquit ourselves in troubled times; cheerful amid anxieties, collected in dangers, generous towards enemies, patient in pain and sorrow, subdued in good fortune! How manifold are the ways of the Spirit, how various the graces which He imparts; what depth and width is there in that moral truth and virtue for which we are created! Contrast one with another the Scripture Saints; how different are they, yet how alike! how fitted for their respective circumstances, yet how unearthly, how settled and composed in the faith and fear of God! As in the Services, so in the patterns of the Church. God has met all our needs, all our frames of mind. "Is any afflicted? let him pray; is any merry? let him sing Psalms."* Is any in joy or in sorrow? there are Saints at hand to encourage and guide him. There is Abraham for nobles, Job for men of wealth and merchandise, Moses for patriots, Samuel for rulers, Elijah for reformers, Joseph for those who rise into distinction; there is Daniel for the forlorn, Jeremiah for the persecuted, Hannah for the downcast, Ruth for the friendless, the

* James v. 13.

Shunammite for the matron, Caleb for the soldier, Boaz for the farmer, Mephibosheth for the subject ; but none is vouchsafed to us in more varied lights, and with more abundant and more affecting lessons, whether in his history or in his writings, than he whose eulogy is contained in the words of the text, as cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and prudent in matters, and comely in person, and favoured by Almighty God. May we be taught, as he was, to employ the gifts, in whatever measure given us, to God's honour and glory, and to the extension of that true and only faith which is the salvation of the soul !

SERMON V.

JEROBOAM.

1 KINGS xiii. 2.

HE cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name ; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

THESE words are parts of a narrative which we hear read once a year in the Sunday Service, but which can scarcely be understood without some attention to the history which precedes it. It is a prophecy against the form of worship set up in the kingdom of Israel ; let us consider what this kingdom and this worship were, and how this wo came to be uttered by a prophet of God.

When Solomon fell into idolatry, he broke what may be called his coronation oath, and at once forfeited God's favour. The essential duty of a king of the chosen people was to act as God's representative, to govern for Him. David was called a man after God's heart, because he was thus faithful ; he fulfilled his trust. Solomon failed, failed in he very one duty which, as king of Israel, he was bound to perform.

In consequence, a message came from Almighty God, revealing what he punishment of his sin would be. He might be considered as having forfeited his kingdom, for himself and his posterity. For David's sake, however, this extreme sentence was not pronounced upon him. First, since the promise had been made to David that his son should reign

after him, though that son was the very transgressor, yet *he* was spared the impending evil on account of the promise. As an honour to David, Solomon's reign closed without any open infliction of divine vengeance; only with the presage of it. "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son."* A still further mitigation of punishment was granted, still for David's sake. It had been promised David, "I will set up thy seed after thee, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever . . . If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men; but My mercy shall not depart away from him," as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee."† Accordingly when Solomon had sinned, and the kingdom was rent from him, still holy David's seed was not utterly put away before a new king, as the family of Saul had fallen before David; part of the kingdom was still left to the descendants of the faithful king. "Howbeit, I will not rend away *all* the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son," Solomon's son, "for *David My servant's sake*." This one tribe was the tribe of Judah, David's own tribe; to which part of Benjamin was added, as being in the neighbourhood. And this kingdom, over which David's line reigned for four hundred years after him, is called the kingdom of Judah.—But with this kingdom of Judah we are not now concerned; but with that larger portion of the tribes, which was rent away from David's house, and forms what is called the kingdom of Israel.

These were the circumstances under which the division of the kingdom was made. Solomon seems to have allowed himself in tyrannical conduct towards his subjects, as well as in idolatry. On his death the people came to his son Rehoboam, at Shechem, and said. "Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee." Rehoboam was rash enough to answer, after three days' deliberation, "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."‡ Now every one sees that Rehoboam here acted very wrongly, and Solomon too, as I have said, had sinned grievously before him. His oppression of the people was a *sin*; yet, you will observe, the people had no right to complain. They had brought this evil on themselves; they had obstinately courted and struggled after it. They would have "a king like the nations," a despotic king:

* 1 Kings xi. 11, 12.

† 2 Sam. vii. 12—15.

‡ 1 Kings xii. 4. 14.

and now they had one, they were discontented. Samuel had not only earnestly and solemnly protested against this measure, as an offence against their Almighty Governor, but had actually forewarned them of the evils which despotic power would introduce among them. "He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; he will set them to ear his ground and to reap his harvest and to make his instruments of war. He will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, and give them to his servants." The warning ends thus: "And ye shall cry out in that day, *because of your king which ye shall have chosen you*, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."^{*} These were Samuel's words beforehand. Now all this had come upon them: as they had sown, so they had reaped. And, as matters stood, their best course would have been contentment, resignation; it was their duty to bear the punishment of their national self-will. But one sin was not enough for them. They proceeded as men commonly do, to mend (as they considered) their first sin, by a fresh one;—they rebelled against their king. "What portion have we in David?" they said, "neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel,—now see to thine own house, David."[†] Ten tribes out of twelve revolted from their king in that day. Here they were quite inexcusable. Even putting it out of the question that they had brought the evil on themselves, still, independently of this, their king's tyranny did not justify their sudden, unhesitating, violent rebellion. He was acting against no engagement or stipulation. Because their king did not do his duty to them, this was no reason they should not do their duty to him. Say that he was cruel and rapacious, still they might have safely trusted the miraculous providence of God, to have restrained the king by His prophets, and to have brought them safely through. This would have been the way of *faith*; but they took the matter into their own hands, and got into further difficulty. And I wish you to observe, that all the evil arose from this original fault, worked out in its consequences through centuries, viz. their having a king at all.

So much, then, for their first sin, and their second sin. To continue further the history of their downward course, we must look to the man whom they made the leader of their rebellion. This was Jeroboam.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had been, during Solomon's life-time, appointed to collect the tribute from the tribe of Ephraim, the most powerful of the ten tribes; a situation which gave him influence and

* 1 Sam. viii. 11—18.

† 1 Kings xii. 16.

authority in that part of the country. The king appointed him, "seeing the young man that he was industrious." We are told too that he was "a mighty man of valour."* Thus honoured by Solomon, he abused his trust, even in the king's life-time, by rebelling against him. "Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, even he lift up his hand against the king. When Solomon, in consequence, sought to kill him," he fled to Egypt, when Shisak, the king, sheltered him. On Solomon's death he returned to his country, and at the invitation of the revolting tribes, headed their rebellion. "It came to pass when all Israel (*i. e.* the ten tribes) heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only."†

Now, that Jeroboam was an instrument in God's hand to chastise Solomon's sin, is plain; and there is no difficulty in conceiving how a wicked man, without being any excuse to him, still may bring about the Divine purposes. But in Jeroboam's particular case there *is* this difficulty, at first sight; that Almighty God had seemed to sanction his act by *promising* him, in Solomon's life-time, the kingdom of the ten tribes. The prophet Ahijah had met him, and delivered to him a message from "the Lord, the God of Israel." "I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes *to thee*." And it was on account of this prophecy that Jeroboam "lifted up his hand against the king." On a little consideration, however, we shall find no difficulty here: for though Almighty God promised him the kingdom, he did not tell him to *gain it for himself*; and, if we must not do evil that good may come, surely we may not do evil that a promise may be fulfilled; and to "rebel against his lord" (in the words of Scripture) was a plain indisputable sin. God, who made the promise, could of course fulfil it in His own time. He did not require man's crime to bring it about. It was, of course, an insult to His holiness and power to suppose He did. Jeroboam ought to have waited patiently God's time; this would have been the part of true faith. But it had always been, as on this occasion, the sin of the Israelites, to outrun God's providence; and even when they chose to pursue His ends, to wish to work them out their own way. They never would "be still and know that He was God," wait His word and follow His guidance. Thus, when they first took possession of the promised land, they were told to cast the nations out, and utterly destroy all that did not leave the country. They soon became weary of this, and thought they had found out a better way. They thought it wiser to spare their enemies, and

* 1 Kings xi. 23.

† 1 Kings xii. 20.

form alliances with them, and put them under tribute. This brought them first into idolatry, then into captivity. When Samuel rescued them, and their hopes revived, their first act was to choose a king like the nations, contrary to God's will. And Jeroboam, in this instance, as a special emblem of the whole people in the rebellion itself, had not patience to wait, and faith to trust God, that "what He had promised He was able also to perform." That it was *a trial* to Jeroboam we need not deny; of course it was. He was tried and found wanting. Had he withstood the temptation, and refrained himself till lawfully called to reign, untold blessings might have been showered on him and on his people, who, in the actual history, were all cut off for their sins. He was not the first man who had thus been tried. David had been promised Saul's kingdom, and anointed thereunto by Samuel, years before he came into possession; yet, though he was persecuted by Saul, and had his life several times in his power, still he would not lift up his hand against his king. He had the faith of his forefather Abraham, who, though promised the land he dwelt in, wandered in it as a pilgrim, without daring to occupy it; wandered on with a band of trained servants at his command, who might have gained for him a territory had he desired it, as certainly as they smote Chedorlaomer and recovered Lot and his goods. David inherited this patient faith, and through it "obtained the promise," and founded a throne in righteousness and truth. Had Jeroboam followed it, he too might have been the father of a line of kings; he might have been the instrument and object of God's promised favour towards the house of Joseph: satisfying, in his own person, the prophecies which Jacob and Moses* had delivered, and Joshua, himself an Ephraimite, had begun to fulfil, and founding a dominion not inferior in glory to that of Judah and Jerusalem.

Jeroboam, then, is not excused, though Ahijah prophesied; but, next, let us inquire how did he act when at length seated on the throne? It is not surprising, after such a beginning, that he sinned further and more grievously. When a man begins to do wrong, he cannot answer for himself how far he may be carried on. He does not see beforehand, he cannot know, where he shall find himself after the sin is committed. One false step forces him to another, for retreat is impossible. This, which occurs every day, is instanced, first, in the history of the whole people, and then, in the history of Jeroboam. For a while, indeed, he seemed to prosper. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had brought an extraordinary force of chosen men against him; but Almighty God, willing there should be no blood shed, designing to punish Solomon's

* Gen. xlix. 22—26. Deut. xxxiii. 13—17. cf. 1 Kings xi. 38.

idolatry, and intending to leave Jeroboam to himself, to work out the fruit of his rebellion, and then to judge and smite him with His own arm, would not allow the war. The prophet Shemaiah was sent to Rehoboam to put an end to it, and Rehoboam obeyed.

Thus Jeroboam seemed to have every thing his own way; but soon a difficulty arose which he had thought light of, if he thought of it at all. The Jewish nation was not only a kingdom, but a church, a religious as well as a political body; and Jeroboam found, before long, that in setting up a new kingdom in Israel, he must set up a new religion too.

It was ordered in the Law of Moses, that all the men throughout Israel should go up to Jerusalem to worship three times a year; but Jerusalem was, at this time, the capital of the kingdom of Judah, the rival kingdom; and Jeroboam clearly saw that if his new subjects were allowed to go up thither, they could not remain his subjects long, but would return to their former allegiance. Here, then, a second false step was necessary to complete the first; for a false step that must have been, which, as it would seem, required for its protection a violation of the Law of Moses. He, doubtless, argued that he was obliged to do what he did, that he could not help himself. It is true;—sin is a hard master; once sold over to it, we cannot break our chain; one evil concession requires another.

“Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel.”* A melancholy counsel it was: he resolved to select places for religious worship in his own kingdom. This was against the Law of course; but what he did was worse than this. He could not build a Temple like Solomon’s, and yet he needed some visible sign of the presence of God. Almighty God had bid the Israelites take to themselves no sign of His presence, no likeness of Him; but Jeroboam thought he could not do better than set up two figures of gold, one at each end of his country, not indeed as representations (he would argue) but as emblems and memorials of the true God, and as marking the established place of worship. It is probable that the age of Solomon, a season of peace, when the arts were cultivated and an intercourse opened with foreign nations, was a season also of a peculiar religious corruption, such as had never occurred before. All

* 1 Kings xii. 26—28.

through their history, indeed, the Israelites had opposed God's will ; but by this time they had learned to defend their disobedience by argument, and to transgress upon a system. Jeroboam's sins, in regard to religious worship, were not single, or inconsistent with each other, but depended on this principle,—that there is no need to attend to the positive laws and the outward forms and ceremonies of religion, so that we attend to the substance. In setting up these figures of gold, it was far from his intention to oppose the worship of the One True God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Saviour of Israel ; the words he used on the occasion, and the course of the history show this. He thought he was only altering the discipline of the Church, as we should now call it, and he might plausibly ask, what did that matter ? He was but putting another emblem of God in the place of the Cherubim. He made merely such alterations as change of circumstances and the course of events rendered indispensable. He was in difficulties, and had to consider, not what was best, or what he himself should choose, had he to choose, but what was practicable.

The figure he adopted, as a memorial of Almighty God, was in the shape of an ox or calf, the same that the Israelites had set up in the wilderness. It is hardly known what is the meaning of the emblem, which doubtless came from Egypt. The ox is thought to be the emblem of life or strength ; and, being set up as a religious monument, might be intended to signify God's creative power. But however this might be, it was, at any rate, a direct and open transgression of the second Commandment. "The king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem ; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan."

Even this open idolatrous worship, not merely tolerated, but established, even this was not the last sin of this unhappy man, who had begun a course of wickedness upon system, and then left it as an inheritance for others more abandoned than himself to perfect. The tribe of Levi, who were especially consecrated to religious purposes, had their possessions not in one place, but scattered up and down the country. It was not to be supposed that they, who executed judgment upon the sin of the calf in the wilderness, would tamely suffer this renewal of the ancient offence in a more heinous shape. They refused to countenance the idolatrous worship, and Jeroboam, led on by hard necessity, cast them out of the country, got possession of their cities and lands, and put in priests of his own making in their stead. "He made a house of high places," and "he and his sons cast off the Levites from

executing the priest's office unto the Lord, and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made ; priests of the lowest of the people which were not of the sons of Levi."* And he changed the solemn feast days, and dared to offer incense, himself intruding first, for example's sake into the sacred office.

In consequence of these impious proceedings, not only "the priests and Levites, that were in all Israel," left his kingdom and retired to Judæa, but also, "after them, out of all the" other "tribes, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers."

Truly this was an ill-omened commencement of his reign. He had made it impossible for pious Israelites to remain in the country. The irreligious alone held by him. Jeroboam ruled in a country given up, as it seemed, to evil spirits. So true is it, in a kindred sense too that in which the words were used by Samuel, that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."†

Now, then, we come to the concluding scene of this course of crime, perpetrated by one man,—the transaction to which the text belongs.

It was on the new feast day "which he had devised of his own heart," and at Bethel where the idol was set up. The people were collected from all parts of the country, and the king "offered upon the altar and burnt incense." Such was the formal inauguration of the false religion in God's own hallowed country, answering to that sacred solemnity when Solomon offered the prayer of dedication in the Temple. The glory of God had come down on that chosen place in token of His favour, and now at Bethel, which He had once specially visited in an earlier age, He suffered not the heathen act to pass without an indication of His wrath. One of His prophets was sent from Judah to attend the festival ; but, as if he were entering a country infected by the pestilence, he was bid go into no house, nor eat, nor drink while he was in it, nay, he was not even to return to his home the same way by which he came, as if his feet must not touch the polluted earth twice.

When the prophet came he uttered his message before the apostate king. It was a prophecy ; a prophecy set up as a witness against the complicated sins of the people, the destiny of that rebellious and idolatrous kingdom stamped upon it in the day of its nativity. The man of God address the altar, as not deigning to speak to Jeroboam, and foretold its fate. He announced that, after no long time, the idolatrous power should be destroyed, and that very altar should last long

* Kings xii. 31. 2 Chron. xi. 14, 15.

† 1 Sam. xv. 23.

enough to see its fall ; for upon it, fragrant as it now was with incense, the impious priests should be sacrificed, and men's bones burned ; moreover that all this should be done by a prince of the house of Judah ; thus intimating that David's royal line would outlive the revolting kingdom of Israel. " O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name ; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." To show his Divine commission, the prophet gave the word, and the altar was miraculously rent in twain, and the ashes of the sacrifice scattered on the ground. Nothing could be more public than a judgment like this, denounced from God Himself, after Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had not been allowed to take the matter into his own hands. And to make the occurrence still more impressive, two further signs were added. Jeroboam stretched forth his hand to seize the prophet ; it was instantly shrivelled up so that he could not pull it to him again. At the prophet's prayer, it was restored. The second miracle was still more awful. The prophet, wearied with his journey, was, on his return, persuaded by a bad man to eat and drink, against the express word of God declared to him. An immediate judgment followed. As he sat at table, his seducer was constrained to declare to him his punishment,—that his body should not come into the sepulchre of his fathers ; and as he went home, a lion, God's second instrument for its infliction, met and slew him, yet did not devour him, nor touch the ass he rode on, nor molest other passengers he met, but, fixed to the spot by miracle, he stood over the prophet's body, a sign, more truly than the idols at Dan and Bethel, of God's power, holiness, and fearful justice, and suggesting, throughout all Israel, the fearful argument,—“ If God so punish His own children, what will be the final, though delayed, punishment of the wicked ? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?”*

As for Jeroboam, in spite of all this, “after this thing he returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places ; whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.”† Such was his life.

At the close of his reign, he lost even his earthly prosperity. “The Lord struck him, and he died.” Such was his end.

His family was soon cut off from the throne ; and after all his wise counsels and bold plans he has left but his name and title to posterity.

* 1 Pet. iv. 18.

† 1 Kings xiii. 33.

“Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin.” Such is his memorial.

“Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited.”*

It requires but a few words to show the application of this history to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. So strongly does it portray to us the existing disorders and schisms of the Christian Church,—the profane and tyrannical usage which it meets with from the world,—that the only question which can possibly arise in the mind is, whether it is allowable to apply it, and whether, as the events are alike, their respective character and their issue are like each other also. This, I say, is the only question, whether we may, without blame, judge of what we see, by the light of what we read in the history of Israel; and I wish all readers would clearly understand that this is the only question. If the deeds of Israel and Jeroboam may be taken as types of what has been acted under the Gospel for centuries past, can we doubt that schism, innovation in doctrine, a counterfeit priesthood, sacrilege, and violence, are sins so heinous and crying, that there is no judgment too great for them, no woe which we may not expect will ultimately fall on the systems which have been born in them, and the lineage of their perpetrators? What other lesson can we draw from the history but this? but that we ought to draw a lesson, is plain from the repeated declaration of St. Paul. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our teaching.” “All these things happened unto them as types, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” St. Peter also and St. Jude expressly apply occurrences in the Old Testament to parallels under the Gospel.†

May God give us the will and the power to realize to our minds this most serious truth, and fairly to follow it out in its necessary consequences! And may He of His mercy have pity upon our poor distracted Church, rescue it from the dominion of the heathen, and grant that “the world’s course may be so peaceably ordered by His governance, that” it and all the branches of the One Church Catholic “may joyfully serve Him in all godly quietness!”

* Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

† Rom. xv. 4. 1 Cor. i. 11. 2 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Pet. ii. 1—15. Jude 5—11.

S E R M O N V I .

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

MATT. xix. 17.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

LET a plain man read the Gospels with a serious and humble mind, and as in God's presence, and I suppose he would be in no perplexity at all about the meaning of these words. They are clear as the day at first reading, and the rest of our Saviour's teaching does but corroborate their obvious meaning. I conceive that if such a man, after reading them and the other similar passages which occur in the Gospels, were told that he had not mastered the sense of them, and that in matter of fact to attempt to enter into life by keeping the commandments, to attempt to keep the commandments in order to enter into life, were suspicious and dangerous modes of expression, and that the use of them showed an ignorance of the real spirit of Christ's doctrine, he would in despair say, "then truly Scripture is not a book for the multitude, but for those only who have educated and refined understandings, so as to see things in a sense different from their obvious meaning."

Or again, supposing one, who disbelieved our Lord's divinity, fell in with persons who did thus consider that to keep the commandments by way of entering into life, was a sign of spiritual blindness in a man, not to say of pride and reprobation; do you suppose there would be any possibility of their silencing him as regards his own particular heresy, with Scripture proofs of the sacred truth which he denied? For can the doctrine that Christ is God, be more clearly enunciated than the precept that, to enter into life, we must keep the commandments? and is it not the way to make men think that Scripture has no definite meaning at all, and that each man may fairly put his own sense upon it, when they see our Lord's plain directions thus explained away?

The occasion of this unreal interpretation of Scripture, which, in fact, does exist among us to a great extent, is, that St. Paul, in some passages of his Epistles, teaches us that we are accepted and saved by faith; and it is argued that, since he wrote under the guidance of the promised Spirit, his is the true gospel mode of Speech, and that the language of Christ, the Eternal Word of God, must be drawn aside, however violently, into that certain meaning which is assumed as the only true sense of St. Paul. *How* our Divine Master's words are explained away, what ingenious refinements are used to deprive us of the plain and solemn sense which they bear on their very front, it profits not here to inquire; still no one, it may be presumed, can deny, that, whether rightly or wrongly, they *are* turned aside in a very unexpected way, unless rather they are put out of sight altogether, and forgotten, as if superseded by the Apostolic Epistles. Doubtless those Epistles are inspired by the Holy Spirit; but He was sent from Christ to glorify and illuminate the words of Christ. The two Heavenly witnesses cannot speak diversely; faith will listen to Them both. Surely our duty is, neither to resist the One nor the other; but humbly to consider whether there is not some one substantial doctrine which they teach in common; and that with God's blessing I will now attempt to do.

How are we sinners to be accepted by Almighty God? Doubtless the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the *meritorious cause* of our justification, and His Church is the *ordained instrument* of conveying it to us. But our present question relates to another subject, to *our own part* in appropriating it; and here I say Scripture makes two answers, saying sometimes "Believe, and you shall be saved," and sometimes "Keep the commandments, and you shall be saved." Let us consider whether these two modes of speech are not reconcilable with each other.

What is meant by faith? it is to feel in good earnest that we are creatures of God; it is a practical perception of the unseen world; it is to understand that this world is not enough for our happiness, to look beyond it on towards God, to realize His presence, to wait upon Him, to endeavour to learn and to do His will, and to seek our good from Him. It is not a mere temporary strong act or impetuous feeling of the mind, an impression on a view coming upon it, but it is a *habit*, a state of mind, lasting and consistent. To have faith in God is to surrender oneself to God, humbly to put one's interests, or to wish to be allowed to put them, into His hands who is the Sovereign Giver of all good.

Now, again, let me ask, what is obedience? It is the obvious mode,

suggested by nature, of a creature's conducting himself in God's sight, who fears Him as his Maker, and knows that, as a sinner, he has especial cause for fearing Him. Under such circumstances he "will do what he can" to please Him, as the woman whom our Lord commended. He will look every way to see how it is possible to approve himself to Him, and will rejoice to find any service which may stand as a sort of proof that he is in earnest. And he will find nothing better as an offering, or as an evidence, than obedience to that Holy Law, which conscience tells him has been given us by God Himself; that is, he will be diligent in doing all his duty as far as he knows it and can do it. Thus, as is evident the two states of mind are altogether one and the same; it is quite indifferent whether we say a man seeks God in faith, or say he seeks Him by obedience; and, whereas Almighty God has graciously declared He will receive and bless all that seek Him, it is quite indifferent whether we say, He accepts those who *believe*, or those who *obey*. To believe is to look beyond this world to God, and to obey is to look beyond this world to God; to believe is of the heart, and to obey is of the heart; to believe is not a solitary act, but a consistent habit of trust; and to obey is not a solitary act, but a consistent habit of doing our duty in all things. I do not say that faith and obedience do not stand for separate ideas in our minds, but they stand for nothing more; they are not divided one from the other in fact. They are but one thing viewed differently.

If it be said that a man may keep from sin and do good without thinking of God, and therefore without being religious or having faith; this is true, but nothing to the purpose. It is, alas! too true, that men often do what is in itself right, not from the thought of God, but for some purpose of this world; and all of us have our best doings sullied by the intrusion of bad thoughts and motives. But all this, I say, is nothing to our present purpose; for if a man does right, *not* for religion's sake, but the world's sake, though he happens to be doing right, that is, to perform outwardly good actions, this is in no sense *obedience*, which is of the *heart*. And it was obedience, not mere outward good conduct, which I said belonged to the same temper of mind as faith. And I repeat it, for by obedience is meant obedience not to the world, but to God,—and habitually to obey God is to be constant in looking on to God,—and to look on to Almighty God, is to have faith; so that to "live by faith," or "walk by faith," (according to the Scripture phrases,) that is, to have a habit of faith, and to be obedient, are one and the same general character of mind;—viewed as sitting at Jesus' feet, it is called *faith*; viewed as running to do His will, it is called *obedience*.

If again it be said that a man may be obedient and yet proud of be-

ing so, that is, obedient without having faith, I would maintain, on the other hand, that in matter of fact a man is proud, or (what is sometimes called) self-righteous, not when obedient, but in proportion to his disobedience. To be proud, is to rest on oneself, which they are most chargeable with who do least; but a really obedient mind is necessarily dissatisfied with itself, and looks out of itself for help, from understanding the greatness of its task; in other words, in proportion as a man obeys, is he driven to faith, in order to learn the remedy of the imperfections of his obedience.

All this is clear and obvious to every thinking man; and this view of the subject was surely present to the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture,—for this reason, because they use the two words faith and obedience indiscriminately, sometimes declaring we shall be accepted, saved by *believing*, sometimes by *doing our duty*. And they so interchange these two conditions of God's favour, so quickly pass to and fro from the one view to the other, as to show that in truth the two do not differ, except in idea. If these apparently *two* conditions were merely connected, not substantially one, surely the inspired writers would compare them one with the other,—surely they would be consistent in appropriating distinct offices to each. But, in very truth, from the beginning to the end of Scripture, the one voice of inspiration consistently maintains, not a uniform contrast between faith and obedience, but this *one* doctrine, that the only way of salvation open to us is the *surrender* of ourselves to our Maker in all things, supreme devotion, dedication, the turning with all our heart to God; and this state of mind is ascribed in Scripture sometimes to the believing, sometimes to the obedient, according to the particular passage; and it is no matter to which it is ascribed.

Now I will cite some passages of Scripture in proof of what I have said. The Psalmist says, "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart." "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully."* Here, *obedience* is described as securing a man's salvation. But in another Psalm we read, "How great is thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that *trust in Thee*."† Here, trust or faith is the condition of God's favour. Again, in other Psalms, first, "What man is he that desireth life? Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile. *Depart from evil and do good*, seek peace

* Ps. xv. 1, 2; xxiv. 4.

† Ps. xxxi. 19; xxxiv. 12—14. 18. 22.

and pursue it." . . . Next it is said, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a *broken heart*, and saveth such as be of a *contrite spirit*." Lastly, "None of them that *trust in Him* shall be desolate." Here, obedience, repentance, and faith are successively mentioned as the means of obtaining God's favour; and why all of them, but because they are all names for one and the same substantial character, only viewed on different sides of it, that one character of mind which is pleasing and acceptable to Almighty God? Again, the prophet Isaiah says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."* Yet in the preceding verse he had proclaimed, "Open ye the gates (of the heavenly city) that the righteous nation, which keepeth the Truth, may enter in." In like manner Solomon says, "By *mercy and truth* iniquity is purged:" Daniel, that "*mercy to the poor*" is a "breaking off of sin," and "an healing of error:" Nehemiah prays God to "remember him," and "not wipe out his *good deeds for the House of his God*;" yet Habakkuk says, "the just shall live by his *faith*."†

What honour our Saviour put on faith I need hardly remind you. He blessed Peter's confession, and in prospect those who though they saw Him not on earth, as Thomas, yet believe; and in His miracles of mercy, *faith* was the condition He exacted for the exertion of His powers of healing and restoration. On one occasion he says, "*All things* are possible to him that *believeth*."‡ Yet afterwards in His solemn account of the last judgment, He tells us that it is *obedience to His will* which will then receive His blessing, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."§ Again, the Angel said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God;" and Cornelius is described as a "devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."|| Yet it is in the very same Book of Acts that we read St. Paul's words, "*Believe*, and thou shalt be saved."¶ The Epistles afford us still more striking instances of the intimate association existing in the Apostle's thoughts between believing and obeying, as though exhibitions of one and the same spiritual character of mind. For instance, St. Paul says Abraham was accepted (not by ceremonial observances, but) by *faith*, yet St. James says he was accepted by works of *obedience*. The meaning is clear, that Abraham found favour in God's sight, *because he*

* Isaiah xxvi. 2, 3. † Prov. xvi. 6. Dan. iv. 27. ‡ Neh. xiii. 14. Hab. ii. 4.
 ‡ Mark ix. 23. § Matt. xxv. 40. || Acts x. 2. ¶ Acts xvi. 31.

gave himself up to Him ; this is faith or obedience, whichever we please to call it. No matter whether we say, Abraham was favoured because his faith embraced God's *promises*, or because his obedience cherished God's *commands*, for God's commands are promises, and His promises commands to a heart devoted to Him ; so that, as there is no substantial difference between command and promise, so there is likewise none between obedience and faith. Perhaps it is scarcely correct even to say, that faith comes first and obedience follows as an inseparable second step, and that faith, as being the first step, is accepted. For not a single act of faith can be named but what has in it the nature of obedience, that is, implies the making an effort and a consequent victory. What is the faith which earns Baptism, the very faith which appropriates the free gift of grace, but an acquiescence of the reason in the Gospel Mysteries? Even the thief upon the Cross had (it would seem) to rule his reason, to struggle against sight, and to bring under pride and obstinacy, when he turned to Him as his Saviour, who seemed to mortal eyes only his fellow-sufferer. A mere confession or prayer, which might not be really an act of obedience in us, might be such in him. On the other hand, faith does not cease with the first act, but continues. It works with obedience. In proportion as a man believes, so he obeys ; they come together, and grow together, and last through life. Neither are perfect ; both are on the same level of imperfection ; they keep pace with each other ; in proportion to the imperfection of one so is the imperfection of the other ; and as the one advances, so does the other also.

And now I have described the temper of mind which has, in every age, been acceptable to Almighty God, in its two aspects of faith and obedience. In every age "the righteous shall live by faith." And it is remarkable that these words of the prophet Habakkuk, which St. Paul quotes three several times to show the identity of true religion under all dispensations, do also represent it under these very two characteristics, Righteousness and Faith.

Before closing the subject, however, it may be necessary, in a few words, to explain *why* it is that, in some parts of St. Paul's Epistles, a certain stress is laid upon faith, over and above the other parts of a religious character, in our justification. The reason seems to be as follows ; the Gospel being pre-eminently a covenant of grace, faith is so far of more excellence than other virtues, because it confesses this beyond all others. Works of obedience witness to God's just claims upon us, not to His mercy : but faith comes empty-handed, hides even its own worth, and does but point at that precious scheme of redemption which God's love has devised for sinners. Hence, it is the frame of mind especially

suitable to us, and is said, in a special way, to justify us, because it glorifies God, witnessing that He accepts those, and those only, who confess they are not worthy to be accepted.

On this account, faith has a certain prerogative of dignity under the Gospel. At the same time we must never forget that the more usual mode of doctrine both with Christ and His Apostles is to refer our acceptance to obedience to the commandments, not to faith; and this, as it would appear, from a merciful anxiety in their teaching, lest, in contemplating God's grace, we should forget our own duties.

To conclude. If, after all, to believe and to obey be but different characteristics of one and the same state of mind, in what a most serious error are whole masses of men involved at this day, who are commonly considered religious? It is undeniable that there are multitudes who would avow with confidence and exultation, that they put obedience only in the second place in their religious scheme, as if it were rather a necessary consequence of faith than requiring a direct attention for its own sake; a something subordinate to it, rather than connatural and contemporaneous with it. It is certain, however startling it is to reflect upon it, that numbers do not in any true sense believe that they shall be judged; they believe in a coming judgment as regards the wicked, but they do not believe that all men, that they themselves personally, will undergo it. I wish from my heart that the persons in question could be persuaded to read Scripture with their own eyes, and take it in a plain and natural way, instead of perplexing themselves with their human systems, and measuring and arranging its inspired declarations by an artificial rule. Are they quite sure that in the next world they will be able to remember these strained interpretations in their greatest need? Then surely, while we wait for the judgment, the luminous sentences of Divine Truth, will come over us, first one and then another, and we shall wonder how we ever misunderstood them! Then will they confront us in their simplicity and entireness, and we shall understand that nothing can be added to them, nothing taken away. Then at length, if not before, we shall comprehend our Lord's assurance, that, "He will reward every man according to his works;" St. Paul's, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" St. Peter's, that "He is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead;" St. James's, that "a man is justified by works and not by faith only;" and St. John's that "they are blessed that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through

the gates into the city.”* Whatever else may be true, these declarations, so solemnly, so repeatedly made, must hold good in their plain and obvious sense, and may not be infringed or superseded. So many testimonies combined are “an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast,” and if they mean something else than what they all say, what part of Scripture can we dare trust in future as a guide and consolation?

“O Lord, Thy Word endureth for ever in heaven!” but the expositions of men are written on the seashore, and are blotted out before the evening.

SERMON VII.

CHRISTIAN REPENTANCE.

LUKE xv. 18, 19.

Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.

THE very best that can be said of the fallen and redeemed race of Adam is, that they confess their fall, and condemn themselves for it, and try to recover themselves. And this state of mind, which is in fact the only possible religion left to sinners, is represented to us in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who is described as receiving, then abusing, and then losing God's blessings, suffering from their loss, and brought to himself by the experience of suffering. A poor service indeed to offer, but the best we can offer, to make obedience our second choice when the world deserts us, when that is dead and lost to us wherein we were held!

Let it not be supposed, because I say this, that I think that in the life-time of each one of us there is some clearly marked date at which he began to seek God, and from which he has served Him faithfully. This may be so in the case of this person or that, but it is far from being the rule. We may not so limit the mysterious work of the Holy Ghost. He condescends to plead with us continually, and what He

* Matt. xvi. 27. 2 Cor. v. 10. Acts x. 42. James ii. 24. Rev. xxii. 14.

cannot gain from us at one time, He gains at another. Repentance is a work carried on at divers times, and but gradually and with many reverses perfected. Or rather, and without any change in the meaning of the word repentance, it is a work never complete, never entire,—unfinished both in its inherent imperfection, and on account of the fresh and fresh occasions which arise from exercising it. We are ever sinning, we must ever be renewing our sorrow and our purpose of obedience, repeating our confessions and our prayers for pardon. No need to look back to the first beginnings of our repentance, should we be able to trace these, as something solitary and peculiar in our religious course; we are *ever* but beginning; the most perfect Christian is to himself but a beginner, a penitent prodigal, who has squandered God's gifts, and comes to him to be tried over again, not as a son, but as a hired servant.

In this parable, then, we must not understand the description of the returning prodigal to imply that there is a state of disobedience and subsequent state of conversion definitively marked in the life of Christians generally. It describes the state of all Christians at all times, and is fulfilled more or less, according to circumstances, in this case or that; fulfilled in one way and measure at the beginning of our Christian course, and in another at the end. So I shall now consider it, viz. as describing the *nature* of all true repentance.

1. First, observe, the prodigal son said, "I am no more worthy to be called Thy son, make me as one of Thy hired servants." We know that God's service is perfect freedom, not a servitude; but this it is in the case of those who have long served Him; at first it is a kind of servitude; it is a task till our likings and tastes come to be in unison with those which God has sanctioned. It is the happiness of Saints and Angels in heaven to take pleasure in their duty, and nothing but their duty; for their mind goes that one way, and pours itself out in obedience to God, spontaneously and without thought or deliberation, just as man *sins* naturally. This is the state to which we are tending if we give ourselves up to religion; but in its commencement, religion is necessarily almost a task and a formal service. When a man begins to see his wickedness, and resolves on leading a new life, he asks, *What must I do?* he has a wide field before him, and he does not know how to enter it. He must be bid do some particular plain acts of obedience, to fix him. He must be told to go to Church regularly, to say his prayers morning and evening, and steadily to read the Scriptures. This will limit his efforts to a certain end, and relieve him of the perplexity and indecision which the greatness of his work at first causes. But who does not see that this going to Church, praying in

private, and reading Scripture, must in his case be, in great measure, what is called a form and a task? Having been used to do as he would, and indulge himself, and having very little understanding or liking for religion, he cannot take pleasure in these religious duties; they will necessarily be a weariness to him; nay, he will not be able even to give his attention to them. Nor will he see the use of them; he will not be able to find they make him better, though he repeat them again and again. Thus his obedience at first is altogether that of a hired servant. "The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth."* This is Christ's account of him. The servant is not in his Lord's confidence, does not understand what he is aiming at, or why he commands this and forbids that. He executes the commands given him, he goes hither and thither punctually, but by the mere letter of the command. Such is the state of those who *begin* religious obedience. They do not see any thing come of their devotional or penitential services, nor do they take pleasure in them; they are obliged to defer to God's word simply because it is His word; to do which implies faith indeed, but also shows they are in that condition of a servant which the prodigal felt himself to be in at best.

Now, I insist upon this, because the conscience of a repentant sinner is often uneasy at finding religion a task to him. He thinks he ought to rejoice in the Lord at once, and it is true he is often told to do so; he is often taught to begin by cultivating high affections. Perhaps he is even warned against offering to God what is termed a *formal service*. Now this is reversing the course of a Christian's life. The prodigal son judged better, when he begged to be made one of his father's servants,—he knew his place. We *must begin* religion with what looks like a form. Our fault will be, not in beginning it as a form, but in continuing it as a form. For it is our duty to be ever striving and praying to *enter* into the real spirit of our services, and in proportion as we understand them and love them, they will cease to be a form and a task, and will be the real expression of our minds. Thus shall we gradually be changed in heart from servants into sons of Almighty God. And though from the very first, we must be taught to look to Christ as the Saviour of sinners, still His very love will frighten, while it encourages us, from the thought of our ingratitude. It will fill us with remorse and dread of judgment, for we are not as the heathen, we have received privileges, and have abused them.

2. So much then on the condition of the repentant sinner; next, let us consider the motives which actuate him in his endeavours to serve

* John xv. 15.

God. One of the most natural, and among the first that arise in the mind, is that of *propitiating* Him. When we are conscious to ourselves of having offended another, and wish to be forgiven, of course we look about for some *means* of setting ourselves right with him. If it be a slight offence, our overtures are in themselves enough, the mere expression that we wish our fault forgotten. But if we have committed some serious injury, or behaved with any special ingratitude, we, for a time, keep at a distance, from a doubt how we shall be received. If we can get a common friend to mediate in our behalf, our purpose is best answered. But even in that case we are not satisfied with leaving our interests to another; we try to do something for ourselves; and on perceiving any signs of compassion or placability in the person offended, we attempt to approach him with propositions of our own, either very humble confession, or some acceptable service. It was under this feeling that Jacob attempted to conciliate the governor of Egypt (whom he knew not to be his son Joseph,) with a present of "the best fruits in the land, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts and almonds." And this holds good when applied to the case of sinners desiring forgiveness from God. The marks of His mercy all around us are strong enough to inspire us with some general hope. The very fact that He still continues our life, and has not at once cast us into hell, shows that He is waiting awhile before the wrath comes upon us to the uttermost. Under these circumstances it is *natural* that the conscience-stricken sinner should look round him for some atonement with which to meet his God. And this in fact has been the usual course of religion in all ages. Whether "with burnt offerings and calves of a year old, with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, with the offering of a man's first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul;" or, in a higher way, "by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God;"* by some means or other, repentant sinners have attempted to win God's attention and engage His favour. And this mode has, before now, been graciously accepted by God, though He generally chose the gift which He would accept. Thus Jacob was instructed to sacrifice on the altar at Bethel, after his return from Padan-aram. David, on the other hand, speaks of the more spiritual sacrifice in the fifty-first Psalm: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Such are the services of the penitent, as suggested by nature, and approved by God Himself in the Old Testament.

But now, turning to the parable of the prodigal son, we find nothing

* Micah vi. 6—8.

of this kind in it. There is no mention made here of any offering on his part to his father, any propitiatory work. This should be well observed. The truth is, that our Saviour has shown us in all things a more perfect way than was ever before shown to man. As He promises us a more exalted holiness, an exacter self-command, a more generous self-denial, and a fuller knowledge of truth, so He gives us a more true and noble repentance. The most noble repentance (if a fallen being can be noble in his fall,) the most decorous conduct in a conscious sinner, is an *unconditional surrender* of himself to God,—not a bargaining about terms, not a scheming (so to call it) to be received back again, but an instant *surrender* of himself in the first instance. Without knowing what will become of him, whether God will spare or not, merely with so much hope in his heart as not utterly to despair of pardon, still not looking merely to *pardon* as an *end*, but rather looking to the claims of the Benefactor whom he has offended, and smitten with shame, and the sense of his ingratitude, he must *surrender himself* to his lawful Sovereign. He is a runaway offender; he must come back, as a very first step, before any thing can be determined about him bad or good; he is a rebel, and must lay down his arms. Self-devised offerings might do in a less serious matter; as an atonement for sin, they imply a defective view of the evil and extent of sin in his own case. Such is that perfect way which nature shrinks from, but which our Lord enjoins in the parable,—a surrender. The prodigal son waited not for his father to show signs of placability. He did not merely approach a space, and then stand as a coward, curiously inquiring, and dreading how his father felt towards him. He made up his mind at once to degradation at the best, perhaps to rejection. He arose and went straight on towards his father, with a collected mind; and though his relenting father saw him from a distance, and went out to meet him, still his purpose was that of an instant frank submission. Such must be Christian repentance: First we must put aside the idea of finding a remedy for our sin; then, though we feel the guilt of it, yet we must set out firmly towards God, not knowing for certain that we shall be forgiven. He indeed meets us on our way with the tokens of His favour, and so He bears up human faith, which else would sink under the apprehension of meeting the Most High God; still, for our repentance to be Christian, there must be in it that generous temper of self-surrender, the acknowledgment that we are unworthy to be called any more His sons, the abstinence from all ambitious hopes of sitting on His right hand or left, and the willingness to bear the heavy yoke of bond servants, if He should put it upon us.

This, I say, is Christian repentance. Will it be said, “it is too hard

for a beginner?" true: but I have not been describing the case of a beginner. The parable teaches us what the character of the true penitent is, not how men actually *at first* come to God. The longer we live, the more we may hope to *attain* this higher kind of repentance, viz. in proportion as we advance in the other graces of the perfect Christian character. The truest kind of repentance as little comes at first, as perfect conformity to any other part of God's Law. It is gained by long practice,—it will come at length. The dying Christian will fulfil the part of the returning prodigal more exactly than he ever did in his former years.

When first we turn to God in the actual history of our lives, our repentance is mixed with all kinds of imperfect views and feelings. Doubtless there is in it something of the true temper of simple submission; but the wish of appeasing God on the one hand, or a hard-hearted insensibility about our sins on the other, mere selfish dread of punishment, or the expectation of a sudden easy pardon,—these, and such like principles, influence us, whatever we may say or may think we feel. It is indeed easy enough to have good words put into our mouths, and our feelings roused, and to profess the union of utter self-abandonment and enlightened sense of sin; but to claim is not really to possess these excellent tempers. Really to gain these is a work of time. It is when the Christian has long fought the good fight of faith, and by experience knows how few and how imperfect are his best services; then it is that he is able to acquiesce, and most gladly acquiesces in the statement, that we are accepted by faith only in the merits of our Lord and Saviour. When he surveys his life at the close of it, what is there he can trust in? what act of it will stand the scrutiny of the Holy God? of course no part of it, so much is plain without saying a word. But further, what part of it even is a sufficient evidence to himself of his own sincerity and faithfulness? This is the point which I urge. How shall he know that he is really forgiven after all his sins? Doubtless he may have some humble hope of his forgiveness. St. Paul speaks of the testimony of his conscience as consoling him; but after all, a man's conscience will rather evidence to him some particular act of faith than that he has lived by faith, and has the habit and temper of faith lodged deep in his heart. Besides, his conscience also tells him of numberless actual sins, and numberless omissions of duty; and with the awful prospect of eternity before him, and in the weakness of declining health, how shall he collect himself to appear before God? Thus he is, after all, in the very condition of the returning prodigal, and cannot go beyond him, though he has served God ever so long. He can but *surrender* himself to God, as after all, a worse than unprofitable servant, resigned to God's will,

whatever it is, with more or less hope of pardon, as the case may be; doubting not that Christ is the sole meritorious Author of all grace, resting simply on Him who, "if He will, can make him clean," but not venturing to take for granted his restoration to his Father's favour, because unable, as he well knows, to read his own heart in that clear unerring way in which God reads it. Under these circumstances, how vain it is to tell him of his own good deeds, and to bid him look back on his past consistent life! This reflection will rarely comfort him; and, when it does, it will be the recollection of the instances of God's mercy towards him in former years, which will be the chief ground of encouragement in it. No, his true stay is, that Christ came "to call sinners to repentance," that "He died for the ungodly." He acknowledges and adopts, as far as he can, St. Paul's words, and nothing beyond them, "This a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*, of whom I am chief."*

I shall but observe in addition to what has been said, that I have been describing the nature of true repentance, and not speaking of the time and manner in which God forgives us. The parable seems to imply, that God in His mercy forgives *as soon* as a man truly repents. He calls those men sons, and honours them with His most condescending favour, who still call *themselves* servants. He makes them His friends, according to His promise, and guides them on heavenward, while they are still in fear and suspense, because they do not know that they are accepted. Accept them, we trust, He does, but He does not simply tell them while He does it. He hides His own mercy. He has not vouchsafed a Sacrament after Baptism, like Baptism, to re-assure them of it. He leaves them in suspense for their good. Still there is joy in heaven, though no echo of it reaches earth. God accepts them, and the Angels know it; and whenever God takes them hence, they will know it too.

Who shall dare approach Christ at the dreadful day of judgment, who has rejected the calling of His Spirit here? Who shall then dare to surrender himself to the great God, when hell is opened ready to receive him? Alas! it is only because *some* hope is left to us that we dare give ourselves up to Him *here*; *despair* ever keeps away. But then, when He takes his seat as the severe Judge of sinners, who, among His slothful disobedient servants, will willingly present himself? Surely the time of *submission* will then be over; resignation has no place among fallen spirits; they are swept away by the uncontrollable power of God. "Bind him *hand and foot* and take him away;"† such will be the dreadful command. They *would* struggle if they *could*.

* Matt. ix. 13. Rom v. 6. 1 Tim. i. 15.

† Matt. xxii. 13.

And in hell they will be still tormented, by the worm of proud rebellious hatred of God ! Not even ages will reconcile them to a hard endurance of their fate, not even the dry apathy in which unbelievers on earth take refuge, will be allowed them. There is no fatalism in the place of torment. The devils see their doom was their own fault, yet they are unable to be sorry for it. It is their *will* that is in direct energetic variance with the will of God, and they know it.

Consider this my brethren, and lay it to heart. Doubtless you must render yourselves to God's mercy here, or else be forced away before his anger hereafter.

"To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts."*

SERMON VIII.

CONTRACTED VIEWS IN RELIGION.

LUKE xv. 29.

Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment ; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.

THERE is a general correspondence between this parable, and that in St. Matthew's gospel, of the two sons whom their father bade go work in his vineyard ; but they differ as regards the character of the professedly obedient son : in St. Matthew he says, "I go, Sir, and went not ;" in the parable before us he is of a far different class of Christians, though not without his faults. There is nothing to show that he is insincere in his profession, though in the text he complains in a very unseemly and foolish way. He bears a considerable resemblance to the labourers in the vineyard, who complained of their master ; though they are treated with greater severity. The elder brother of the prodigal complained of his father's kindness towards the penitent ; the labourers of the vineyard murmured against the good-man of the house for receiving and rewarding those who came late to his service as liberally as themselves. They, however, spoke in selfishness and presumption ;

* Heb. iii. 7—13.

but he in perplexity, as it would appear, and distress of mind. Accordingly he was comforted by his Father, who graciously informed him of the reason of his acting as he had done. "Son, *thou* art ever with me," he says, "and all that **I** have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

Now let us try to understand the feelings of the elder brother, and to apply the picture to the circumstances in which we find ourselves at present.

First, then, in the conduct of the father, there seemed, at first sight, an evident departure from the rules of fairness and justice. Here was a reprobate son received into his favour on the first stirrings of repentance. What was the use of serving him dutifully if there were no difference in the end between the righteous and the wicked? This is what we feel and act upon in life constantly. In doing good to the poor, for instance, a chief object is to encourage industrious and provident habits; and it is evident we should hurt and disappoint the better sort, and defeat our object, if, after all, we did not take into account the difference of their conduct, though we promised to do so, but gave those who did not work nor save, all the benefits granted to those who did. The elder brother's case, then, seemed a hard one; and that, even without supposing him to feel jealous, or to have unsuitable notions of his own importance and usefulness. Apply this to the case of religion, and it still holds good. At first sight, the reception of the penitent sinner seems to interfere with the reward of the faithful servant of God. Just as the promise of pardon is abused by bad men to encourage themselves in sinning on, that grace may abound, so on the other hand it is misapprehended by the good, so as to dispirit them. For what is our great stay and consolation amid the perturbations of this world? This truth and justice of God. This is our one light in the midst of darkness. "He loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity;" "just and right is He." Where else shall we find rest for our foot all over the world? Consider in how mysterious a state all things are placed; the wicked are uppermost in power and name, and the righteous are subjected to bodily pain and mental suffering as if they did not serve God. What a temptation is this to unbelief! The Psalmist felt it when he spoke of the prosperity of the wicked. "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."* It is to meet this difficulty that Almighty God has vouchsafed again and again to declare

* Ps. lxxiii. 12, 13.

the unswerving rule of His government,—favour to the obedient, punishment to the sinner; that there is “no respect of persons with Him;” that “the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”* Recollect how often this is declared in the book of Psalms. “The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; His countenance doth behold the upright.” “With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful, with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright. With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure, and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people, but wilt bring down high looks.” “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” “Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good.”† These declarations, and numberless others like them, are familiar to us all; and why, I say, so often made, except to give us that one fixed point for faith to rest upon, while all around us is changing and disappointing us? viz. that we are quite sure of peace in the end, bad as things may now look, if we do but follow the rule of conscience, avoid sin, and obey God. Hence, St. Paul tells us that “he that cometh to God, must believe that He is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him.”‡ Accordingly, when we witness the inequalities of the present world, we comfort ourselves by reflecting they will be put right in another.

Now the restoration of sinners seems to interfere with this confidence; it seems at first sight, to put bad and good on a level. And the feeling it excites in the mind is expressed in the parable by the words, of the text: “These many years do I serve Thee, neither transgressed I at any time Thy commandment, yet I never have been welcomed and honoured with that peculiar joy which Thou showest towards the repentant sinner.” This is the expression of an agitated mind, that fears lest it be cast back upon the wide world, to grope in the dark without a God to guide and encourage it in its course.

The condescending answer of the Father in the parable is most instructive. It sanctions the great truth, which seemed in jeopardy, that it is *not* the same thing in the end to obey or disobey, expressly telling us that the Christian penitent is not placed on a footing with those who have consistently served God from the first. “Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine;” that is, why this sudden fear and distrust? can there be any misconception on your part

* Rom. ii. 11. Ezek. xviii. 20.

† Ps. i. 6; xi. 7; xviii. 25—27; xxxii. 10; cxlv. 4. ‡ Heb. xi. 6.

because I welcome your brother? do you not yet understand Me? Surely you have known Me too long to suppose that *you* can lose by his gain. *You* are in My confidence. I do not make any outward display of kindness towards *you*, for it is a thing to be taken for granted. We give praise and make professions to strangers, not to friends. You are My heir, all that I have is thine. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Who could have thought that it were deedful to tell to thee truths which thou hast heard all thy life long? Thou art *ever* with Me; and canst thou really grudge that I should, by one mere *act* of rejoicing, show my satisfaction at the sinner's recovery, and should console him with a promise of mercy, who, before he heard of it, was sinking down under the dread of deserved punishment? "It was *meet* that we should make merry and be glad," thou as well as thy Father.—Such is our merciful God's answer to His suspicious servants, who think He cannot pardon the sinner without withdrawing His favour from them; and it contains in it both a consolation for the perplexed believer not to distrust Him: and again, a warning to the disobedient, not to suppose that repentance makes all straight and even, and puts a man in the same place as if he had never departed from grace given.

But let us now notice the unworthy feeling which appears in the conduct of the elder brother. "He was angry, and would not go" into the house. How may this be fulfilled in our own case?

There exists a great deal of infirmity and foolishness even in the better sort of men. This is not to be wondered at, considering the original corrupt state of their nature, however it is to be deplored, repented of, and corrected. Good men are, like Elijah, "jealous for the Lord God of hosts," and rightly solicitous to see his tokens around them, the pledges of His unchangeable just government; but then they mix with such good feelings undue notions of self-importance, of which they are not aware. This seemingly was the state of mind which dictated the complaint of the elder brother.

This will especially happen in the case of those who are in the most favoured situations in the Church. All places possess their peculiar temptation. Quietness and peace, those greatest of blessings, constitute the trial of the Christians who enjoy them. To be cast on the world, and to see life, (as it is called,) is a vanity, and "drowns" the unstable "in destruction and perdition;" but, while on the one hand, a religious man may thrive even in the world's pestilent air and on unwholesome food, so on the other hand, he may become sickly, unless he guards against it, from the very abundance of privileges vouchsafed to him in a peaceful lot. The elder brother had always lived at home;

he had seen things go on one way, and, as was natural and right, got attached to them in that one way. But then he could not conceive that they possibly could go on in any other way; he thought he understood his Father's ways and principles far more than he did, and when an occurrence took place, for which he had hitherto met with no precedent, he lost himself, as being suddenly thrust aside out of the contracted circle in which he had hitherto walked. He was disconcerted, and angry with his father. And so in religion, we have need to watch against that narrowness of mind, to which we are tempted by the uniformity and tranquillity of God's providence towards us. We should be on our guard lest we suppose ourselves to have that clear knowledge of God's ways, as to rely implicitly on our own notions and feelings. Men attach an undue importance to this or that point in received opinions or practices, and cannot understand how God's blessing can be given to modes of acting to which they themselves are unaccustomed. Thus the Jews thought religion would come to an end, if the Temple were destroyed, whereas, in fact, it has spread abroad and flourished more marvellously since than ever it did before. In this perplexity of mind the Church Catholic is our divinely intended guide, which keeps us from a narrow interpretation of Scripture, from local prejudices and excitements of the day; and by its clear-sighted and consolatory teaching scatters those frightful self-formed visions which scare us.

But I have not described the extreme state of the infirmity into which the blessing of peace leads unwary Christians. They become not only over-confident of their knowledge of God's ways, but positive in their over-confidence. They do not like to be contradicted in their opinions, and are generally most attached to the very points which are most especially of their own devising. They forget that all men are at best but learners in the school of Divine Truth, and that they themselves ought to be *ever* learning, and that they may be sure of the truth of their creed, without a like assurance in the details of religious opinion. They find it a much more comfortable view, much more agreeable to the indolence of human nature, to give over seeking, and to believe they had nothing more to find.

A right faith is ever eager and on the watch, with quick eyes and ears, for tokens of God's will, whether He speak in the way of nature or of grace. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see, what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."* This is that faith by which (as the pro-

* Heb. ii. 1.

phet continues) "the just shall live." The Psalmist also expresses this expectant temper. "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress."* But as for those who have long had God's favour without cloud or storm, so it is, they grow secure. They do not feel the great gift. They are apt to presume, and so to become irreverent. The elder brother was too familiar with his Father. Irreverence is the very opposite temper to faith. "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." This most gracious truth was the very cause of his murmuring. When Christians have but a little, they are thankful; they gladly pick up the crumbs from under the table. Give them much, they soon forget it is much; and when they find it is not all, and that for other men too, even penitents, God has some good in store, straightway they are offended. Without denying in words their own natural unworthiness, and still having real convictions of it to a certain point, nevertheless, somehow, they have a certain secret over-regard for themselves; at least they *act* as if they thought that the Christian privileges belonged to them over others, by a sort of fitness. And they like respect to be shown them by the world, and are jealous of any thing which is likely to interfere with the continuance of their credit and authority. Perhaps, too, they have pledged themselves to certain received opinions, and this is an additional reason for their being suspicious of what to them is a novelty. Hence such persons are least fitted to deal with difficult times. God works wondrously in the world; and at certain eras His providence puts on a new aspect. Religion seems to be failing when it is merely changing its form. God seems for an instant to desert His own appointed instruments, and to be putting honour upon such as have been framed in express disobedience to His commands. For instance, sometimes He brings about good by means of wicked men, or seems to bless the efforts of those who have separated from His Holy Church more than those of His true labourers. Here is the trial of the Christian's faith, who, if the fact is so, must not resist it, lest haply he be found fighting against God, nor must he quarrel with it after the manner of the elder brother. But he must take every thing as God's gift, hold fast his *principles*, not give *them* up because appearances are for the moment against them, but believe all things will come round at length. On the other hand he must not cease to beg of God, and try to gain the spirit of a sound mind, the power to separate truth from falsehood, and to try the spirits,

* Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2.

the disposition to submit to God's teaching, and the wisdom to act as the varied course of affairs requires; in a word, a portion of that Spirit which rested on the great Apostle, St. Paul.

I have thought it right to enlarge upon the conduct of the elder brother in the parable, because something of his character may perchance be found among ourselves. We have long had the inestimable blessings of peace and quiet. We are unworthy of the least of God's mercies, much more of the greatest. But with the blessing we have the trial. Let us then guard against abusing our happy lot, while we have it, or we may lose it for having abused it. Let us guard against discontent in any shape; and as we cannot help hearing what goes on in the world, let us guard, on hearing it, against all intemperate, uncharitable feelings towards those who differ from us, or oppose us. Let us pray for our enemies; let us try to make out men to be as good as they can fairly and safely be considered; let us rejoice at any symptoms of repentance, or any marks of good principle in those who are on the side of error. Let us be forgiving. Let us try to be very humble, to understand our ignorance, and to rely constantly on the enlightening grace of our Great Teacher. Let us be "slow to speak, slow to wrath;"—not abandoning our principles, or shrinking from the avowal of them when seasonable, or going over to the cause of error, or fearing consequences, but acting ever from a sense of duty, not from passion, pride, jealousy, or an unbelieving dread of the future; feeling gently, even when we have reason to act severely. "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." What a gracious announcement, if we could realize it! and how consolatory, so far as we have reason to hope that we are following on to know God's will, and living in His faith and fear! What should alarm those who have Christ's power, or make them envious who have Christ's fulness? How ought we calmly to regard, and resolutely endure, the petty workings of an evil world, thinking seriously of nothing but of the souls that are perishing in it!

"I, even I, am He that comforteth you," says Almighty God: "who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor? I am the Lord thy God, and I have put My words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people."*

* Isaiah li. 12—16.

SERMON IX.

A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

GEN. xvi. 13.

Thou God seest me.

WHEN Hagar fled into the wilderness from the face of her mistress, she was visited by an Angel, who sent her back; but, together with this implied reproof of her impatience, gave her a word of promise to encourage and console her. In the mixture of humbling and cheerful thoughts thus wrought in her, she recognised the presence of her Maker and Lord, who ever comes to his servants in a two-fold aspect, severe because He is holy, yet soothing as abounding in mercy. In consequence, she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, "Thou God seest me."

Such was the condition of man before Christ came, favoured with some occasional notices of God's regard for individuals, but, for the most part, instructed merely in His general Providence, as seen in the course of human affairs. In this respect even the Law was deficient, though it abounded in proofs that God was a living, all-seeing, all-recompensing, God. It was deficient, in comparison of the Gospel, in evidence of the really existing relation between each soul of man and its Maker, independently of every thing else in the world. Of Moses, indeed, it is said, that "the Lord spake unto him *face to face*, as a man speaketh unto his friend."* But this was an especial privilege vouchsafed to him only and some others, as to Hagar, who records it in the text, not to all the people. But, under the New Covenant, this distinct regard vouchsafed by Almighty God, to every one of us, is clearly revealed. It was foretold of the Christian Church "*All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of*

* Exod. xxxiii. 11.

thy children.”* When the Eternal Son came on earth in our flesh, men saw their invisible Maker and Judge. He showed Himself no longer through the mere powers of nature, or the maze of human affairs, but in our own likeness. “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to kindle the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ;”† that is, in a sensible form, as a really existing individual being. And, at the same time, He forthwith began to speak to *us* as individuals. He, on the one hand, addressed each of us on the other. Thus it was in some sense a revelation face to face.

This is the subject on which I propose now to make a few remarks. And first, let me observe, it is very difficult, in spite of the revelation made us in the Gospel, to master the idea of this particular providence of God. If we allow ourselves to float down the current of the world, living as other men, gathering up our notions of religion here and there, as it may be, we have little or no true comprehension of a particular Providence. We conceive that Almighty God works on a large plan; but we cannot realize the wonderful truth that He sees and thinks of individuals. We cannot believe He is really present every where, that He is wherever we are, though unseen. For instance, we can understand, or think we understand, that He was present on Mount Sinai,—or within the Jewish Temple,—or that He clave the ground under Dathan and Abiram. But we do not in any sufficient sense believe that He is in like manner “about *our* path, and about *our* bed, and spieth out all *our* ways.”‡ We cannot bring ourselves to get fast hold of the solemn fact that He sees what is going on among ourselves at this moment; that this man falls and that man is exalted, at His silent invisible appointment. We use, indeed, the prayers of the Church, and intercede, not only for all conditions of men, but for the King and the Nobility, and the Court of Parliament, and so on, down to individual sick people in our own parish; yet, in spite of all this, we do not bring home to us the truth of His omniscience. We know He is in heaven, and forget that He is also on earth. This is the reason why the multitude of men are so profane: they use light words; they scoff at religion; they allow themselves to be lukewarm and indifferent; they take the part of wicked men; they push forward wicked measures; they defend injustice, or cruelty, or sacrilege, or infidelity; because they have no grasp of a truth, which nevertheless they have no intention to deny that God sees them.

There is, indeed, a self-will, and self-deceit, which would sin on even

* Is. liv. 13.

† 2 Cor. iv. 6.

‡ Ps. cxxxix. 2.

in God's visible presence. This was the sin of Balaam, who took part with the enemies of Israel for reward; and of Zimri, the Son of Salu, a prince of the Simeonites, on whom Phineas did judgment; and such the sin of Saul, of Judas, of Ananias and Sapphira. Alas! doubtless such is the sin of many a man now in England, unless human nature is other than it was aforetime; alas! such a sin is in a measure our own from time to time, as any one may know for certain who is used to self-examination. Yet, over and above this, certainly there is also a great deal of profane sinning from our *forgetting*, not comprehending that we are in God's presence; not comprehending or, (in other words) believing, that He sees and hears and notes down every thing we do.

This again, is often the state in which persons find themselves on falling into trouble. The world fails them, and they despair, because they do not realize to themselves the loving-kindness and the presence of God. They find no comfort in a truth which to them is not a substance but an opinion. Therefore it was that Hagar, when visited in the wilderness by the Angel, called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, "Thou God seest me!" It came as a new Truth to her that, amid her trouble and her waywardness, the eye of God was upon her. The case is the same now. Men talk in a general way of the goodness of God, His benevolence, compassion, and long-suffering; but they think of it as of a flood pouring itself out all through the world; as the light of the sun, not as the continually repeated action of an intelligent and living Mind, contemplating whom it visits and intending what it effects. Accordingly, when they come into trouble, they can but say, "It is all for the best—God is good:" and the like; and it all falls as cold comfort upon them, and does not lessen their sorrow, because they have not accustomed their minds to feel that He is a merciful God, regarding them individually, and not a mere universal Providence acting by general laws. And then, perhaps, all of a sudden the true notion breaks on them, as it did upon Hagar. Some especial Providence, amid their affliction, runs right into their heart; brings it close home to them, in a way they never experienced before, that God sees them. And then, surprised at this, which is a something quite new to them, they go into the other extreme, in proportion to their former apathy; and are led to think that they are especial objects of God's love, more than all other men. Instead of taking what has happened to them as an evidence of His particular Providence over all, as revealed in Scripture, they still will not believe a jot or tittle more than they see; and, while discovering He loves them individually, they do not advance one step, on that account, to the general truth, that He loves other men individually also. Now had they been all along in the practice of studying Scripture, the y

would have been saved from both errors ;—their first, which was blindness to a particular Providence altogether ;—their second, which was a narrow-minded limiting of it to themselves, as if the world at large were rejected and reprobate ; for Scripture represents it as the portion of all men one by one.

I suppose it is scarcely necessary to prove to those who have allowed their minds to dwell on the Gospels, that the peculiar character of our Lord's goodness, as displayed therein, is its tenderness and its considerateness. These qualities are the very perfection of kindness between man and man ; but, from the very extent and complication of the world's system, and from its Maker's being invisible, our imagination scarcely succeeds in attributing them to Him, even when our reason is convinced, and we wish to believe accordingly. His Providence manifests itself in general laws, it moves forward upon the lines of truth and justice ; it has no respect of persons, rewarding the good and punishing the bad, not as individuals, but according to their character. How shall He who is Most Holy direct His love to this man or that for his own sake, contemplating us one by one, without infringing on his own perfections ? Or even were the Supreme Being a God of unmixed benevolence, how, even then, shall the thought of Him come home to our minds with that constraining power which the kindness of a human friend exerts over us ? The greatest acknowledgment we can make of the kindness of a superior, is to say that He acts as if he were personally interested in us. The mass of benevolent men are kind and generous, because it is their way to be so, irrespectively of the object they benefit. Natural temper, a flow of spirits, or a turn of good fortune, opens the heart, which pours itself out profusely on friend and enemy. They scatter benefit as they move along. Now, at first sight, it is difficult to see how our idea of Almighty God can be divested of these earthly notions, either that His goodness is imperfect or that it is fated and necessary ; and wonderful indeed, and adorable is the condescension by which He has met our infirmity. He has met and aided it in that same Dispensation by which He redeemed our souls. In order that we may understand that in spite of His mysterious perfections He has a separate knowledge and regard for individuals, He has taken upon Him the thoughts and feelings of our own nature, which we all understand is capable of such personal attachments. By becoming man, He has cut short the perplexities and the discussions of our reason on the subject, as if He would grant our objections for argument's sake, and supersede them by taking our own ground.

The most winning property of our Saviour's mercy, (if it is right so to speak of it,) is its dependence on time and place, person and circum-

stance ; in other words, its tender discrimination. It regards and consults for each individual as he comes before it. It is called forth by some, as it is not by others, it cannot (if I may say so) manifest itself to every object alike ; it has its particular shade and mode of feeling for each ; and in some it is so wrapt up, as to seem to depend for its own happiness on their well-being. This might be illustrated, as is often done, by our Lord's tender behaviour towards Lazarus and his sisters, or His tears over Jerusalem ; or by His conduct towards St. Peter, before and after his denial of Him, or towards St. Thomas when he doubted, or by His love of His mother, or of St. John. But I will direct your attention rather to his treatment of the traitor Judas ; both because it is not so commonly referred to, and, also, because if there was a being in the whole world whom one might suppose cast out of His presence as hateful and reprobate, it was he who He foresaw would betray Him. Yet we shall find that even this wretched man was followed and encompassed by His serene though solemn regard till the very hour he betrayed Him.

Judas was in darkness and hated the light, and "went to his own place ;" yet he found it, not by the mere force of certain natural principles working out their inevitable results,—by some unfeeling fate, which sentences the wicked to hell,—but by a Judge who surveys him from head to foot, who searches him through and through, to see if there is any ray of hope, any latent spark of faith ; who pleads with him again and again, and, at length abandoning him, mourns over him the while with the wounded affection of a friend rather than the severity of the Judge of the whole earth. For instance, first, a startling warning a year before his trial. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Then, when the time was come, the lowest act of abasement towards one who was soon to betray him and to suffer the unquenchable fire. "He riseth from supper, and . . . poureth water into a bason and began to wash the disciples' feet,"* and Judas in the number. Then a second warning at the same time, or rather a sorrowful lament, spoken as if to Himself, "Ye are not all clean." Then openly, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him ; but wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I ? He said unto him, 'Thou hast said it.' Lastly, when He was actually betrayed by him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come ?" "Judas, (He addresses him by name,) betrayest

* John vi. 70 : xiii. 4, 5.

thou the Son of man with a kiss?"* I am not attempting to reconcile His divine foreknowledge with this special and prolonged anxiety, this personal feeling towards Judas; but wish you only to observe the latter, to observe what is given us by the revelation of Almighty God in the Gospels, viz. an acquaintance with His providential regard for *individuals*, making His sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good. And in like manner doubtless at the last day, the wicked and impenitent shall be condemned, not in a mass, but one by one,—one by one, appearing each in his own turn before the righteous Judge, standing under the full glory of His countenance, carefully weighed in the balance and found wanting, dealt with, not indeed with a weak and wavering purpose, where God's justice claims satisfaction, yet, at the same time, with all the circumstantial solicitude and awful care of one who would fain make, if He could, the fruit of His passion more numerous than it is.

This solemn reflection may be further enforced by considering our Lord's behaviour towards strangers who came to Him. Judas was His friend; but we have never seen Him. How will He look and how does he look upon us? Let His manner in the Gospels towards the multitude of men assure us. All-holy, almighty as He is, and has shown himself to be, yet in the midst of His Divine Majesty, He could display a tender interest in all who approached Him; as if He could not cast His eyes on any of His creatures without the overflowing affection of a parent for his child, regarding it with a full satisfaction, and simply desiring its happiness and highest good. Thus, when the rich young man came to Him, it is said, "And Jesus beholding him, *loved him* and said unto him, One thing thou lackest." When the Pharisees asked a sign, "He sighed deeply in His spirit." At another time, "He looked round about on them,"—as if on every one, to see if here or there perchance there might be an exception to the general unbelief, and to condemn one by one, those who were guilty,†—"He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Again, when a leper came to Him, He did not simply heal him, but "moved with compassion, He put forth His hand."‡

How gracious is this revelation of God's particular providence to those who seek Him! how gracious to those who have discovered that this world is but vanity, and who are solitary and isolated in themselves, whatever shadows of power and happiness surround them! The multitude, indeed, go on without these thoughts, either from insensibility,

* Matt. xxvi. 24, 25, 50. Luke xxii. 48.

† Vide also Matt. xix. 26. Mark iii. 34. Luke xxii. 61.

‡ Mark x. 21. viii. 12; iii. 5; i. 41.

as not understanding their own wants, or changing from one idol to another, as each successively fails. But men of keener hearts would be overpowered by despondency, and would even loathe existence, did they suppose themselves under the mere operation of fixed laws, powerless to excite the pity or the attention of Him who has appointed them. What should they do especially, who are cast among persons unable to enter into their feelings, and thus strangers to them, though by long custom ever so much friends! or have perplexities of mind they cannot explain to themselves, much less remove, and no one to help them,—or have affections and aspirations pent up within them, because they have not met with objects to which to devote them,—or are misunderstood by those around them, and find they have no words to set themselves right with them, or no principles in common by way of appeal,—or seem to themselves to be without place or purpose in the world, or to be in the way of others,—or have to follow their own sense of duty without advisers or supporters, nay, to resist the wishes and solicitations of superiors or relatives,—or have the burden of some painful secret, or of some incommunicable solitary grief! In all such cases the Gospel narrative supplies our very need, not simply presenting to us an unchangeable Creator to rely upon, but a compassionate Guardian, a discriminating Judge and Helper. God beholds thee individually, whoever thou art. He “calls thee by thy name.” He sees thee, and understands thee, as He made thee. He knows what is in thee, all thy own peculiar feelings and thoughts, thy dispositions and likings, thy strength and thy weakness. He views thee in thy day of rejoicing and thy day of sorrow. He sympathizes in thy hopes and thy temptations. He interests Himself in all thy anxieties and remembrances, all the risings and fallings of thy spirit. He has numbered the very hairs of thy head and the cubits of thy stature. He compasses thee round and bears thee in His arms; He takes thee up and sets thee down. He notes thy very countenance, whether smiling or in tears, whether healthful or sickly. He looks tenderly upon thy hands and thy feet; He hears thy voice, the beating of thy heart, and thy very breathing. Thou dost not love thyself better than He loves thee. Thou canst not shrink from pain more than He dislikes thy bearing it; and if He puts it on thee, it is as thou wilt put it on thyself, if thou art wise, for a greater good afterwards. Thou art not only His creature, (though for the very sparrows He has a care, and pitied the “much cattle” of Nineveh,) thou art man redeemed and sanctified, His adopted son, favoured with a portion of that glory and blessedness which flows from Him everlastingly unto the Only-begotten. Thou art chosen to be His, even above thy fellows who dwell in the East and South. Thou wast one of

those for whom Christ offered up His last prayer, and sealed it with His precious blood. What a thought is this, a thought almost too great for our faith? Scarce can we refrain from acting Sarah's part, when we bring it before us, so as to "laugh" from amazement and perplexity. What is man, what are we, what am I, that the Son of God should be so mindful of me? What am I, that He should have raised me from almost a devil's nature to that of an Angel's? that he should have changed my soul's original constitution, new-made me, who from my youth up have been a transgressor, and should Himself dwell personally in this very heart of mine, making me His temple? What am I, that God the Holy Ghost should enter into me, and draw up my thoughts heavenward "with plaints unutterable?"

These are the meditations which come upon the Christian to console him, while he is with Christ upon the holy mount. And, when he descends to his daily duties, they are still his inward strength, though he is not allowed to tell the vision to those around him. They make his countenance to shine, make him cheerful, collected, serene, and firm in the midst of all temptation, persecution, or bereavement. And with such thoughts before us, how base and miserable does the world appear in all its pursuits and doctrines! How truly miserable does it seem to seek good from the creature; to covet station, wealth, or credit; to choose for ourselves, in fancy, this or that mode of life; to affect the manners and fashions of the great; to spend our time in follies; to be discontented, quarrelsome, jealous or envious, censorious or resentful; fond of unprofitable talk, and eager for the news of the day; busy about public matters which concern us not; hot in the cause of this or that interest or party; or set upon gain; or devoted to the increase of barren knowledge! And at the end of our days, when flesh and heart fail, what will be our consolation, though we have made ourselves rich, or have served an office, or been the first man among our equals, or have depressed a rival, or managed things our own way, or have settled splendidly, or have been intimate with the great, or have fared sumptuously, or have gained a name! Say, even if we obtain that which lasts longest, a place in history, yet, after all, what ashes shall we have eaten for bread! And, in that awful hour, when death is in sight, will He, whose eye is now so loving towards us, and whose hand falls on us so gently, will He acknowledge us any more? or if He still speaks, will His voice have any power to stir us? rather will it not repel us as it did Judas, by the very tenderness with which it would invite us to Him?

Let us then endeavour, by His grace, rightly to understand where we stand, and what He is towards us; most tender and pitiful, yet, for all His pity, not passing by the breadth of a single hair the eternal lines

of truth, holiness and justice ; He who can condemn to the wo everlasting, though He weeps and laments beforehand, and who, when once the sentence of condemnation has gone forth, will wipe out altogether the remembrance of us, “and know us not.” The tares were “bound in bundles” for the burning, indiscriminately, promiscuously, contemptuously. “Let us then fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.”

SERMON X.

TEARS OF CHRIST AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

JOHN xi. 34—36.

Jesus said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see.
Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him.

ON first reading these words the question naturally arises in the mind—*why* did our Lord weep at the grave of Lazarus? He knew He had power to raise Him, why should He act the part of those who sorrow for the dead? In attempting any answer to this inquiry, we should ever remember that the thoughts of our Saviour’s mind are far beyond our comprehension. Hardly do we enter into the feelings and meaning of men like ourselves, who are gifted with any special talent ; even human philosophers or poets are obscure from the depth of their conceptions. What then must be the marvellous abyss of love and understanding in Him who, though partaker of our nature, is the Son of God?

This, indeed, is evident, as a matter of fact, on the face of the Scripture record, as any one may see who will take the trouble to inspect it. It is not, for instance, the text alone which raises a question ; but the whole narrative, in which it occurs, exhibits our Saviour’s conduct in various lights, which it is difficult for weak creatures, such as we are, properly to blend together.

When He first received the news of Lazarus’s illness, “He abode two days still in the same place where He was.” Then telling His disciples that Lazarus was dead, He said He was “glad for their sake that He was

not there ;" and said that He would "go and awaken him out of sleep." Then, when He was come to Bethany, where he dwelt, He was so moved by the sorrow of the Jews that "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." Lastly, in spite of His perturbation and weeping, presently He raised Lazarus.

I say, it is remarkable that such difficulties as these should lie on the face of Scripture, quite independently of those arising from the comparison of the texts in question with the doctrine of His divine nature. We know, indeed, there are insuperable mysteries involved in the union of His divine with His human attributes, which seem incompatible with each other ; for instance, how He should be ever blessed, and yet weep, —all-knowing, yet partially ignorant ; but, without entering into the consideration of the mysteries of faith, commonly so called, it is worth inquiring whether the very surface of the sacred history does not contain apparent inconsistencies, of a nature to prepare us for such other difficulties as may lie from a deeper comparison of history with doctrine.

As another instance of the discrepancy I speak of, consider our Saviour's words according to the received versions, "Sleep on now, and take your rest ;" and immediately after, "Rise, let us be going."*

So again, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one ;" then follows, "Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said, It is enough ;" lastly, when Peter used his sword, "Put up again thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."†

I am not saying that we cannot possibly remove any part of the seeming opposition between such passages, but only that on the whole there is quite enough in the narrative to show that He who speaks is not one whose thoughts it is easy to get possession of ; that it is no light matter to put oneself, even in part, into the position of His mind, and to state under what feelings and motives He said this or that ; in a word, I wish to impress upon you, that our Saviour's words are not of a nature to be heard once and no more, but that to understand them we must feed upon them, and live in them, as if by little and little growing into their meaning.

It would be well if we understood the necessity of this more than we do. It is very much the fashion at present to regard the Saviour of the world in an irreverent and unreal way,—as a mere idea or vision ; to speak of Him so narrowly and unfruitfully, as if we only knew of His name ; though Scripture has set Him before us in His actual sojourn on earth, in His gestures, words, and deed, in order that we may have that

* Matt. xxvi. 45, 46.

† Matt. xxvi. 52. Luke xxii. 36. 38.

on which to fix our eyes. And till we learn to do this, to leave off vague statements about His love, His willingness to receive the sinner, His imparting repentance and spiritual aid, and the like, and view Him in His particular and actual works, set before us in Scripture, surely we have not derived from the Gospels that very benefit which they are intended to convey. Nay, we are in some danger, perhaps, even as regards our faith; for, it is to be feared, while the thought of Christ is but a creation of our minds, it may gradually be changed or fade away, it may become defective or perverted; whereas when we contemplate Christ as manifested in the Gospels, the Christ who exists therein, external to our own imaginings, and who is as really a living being, and sojourned on earth as truly as any of us, then we shall at length believe in Him with a conviction, a confidence, and an entireness, which can no more be annihilated than the belief in our senses. It is impossible for a Christian mind to meditate on the Gospels, without feeling, beyond all manner of doubt, that He who is the subject of them is God; but it is very possible to speak in a vague way of His love towards us, and use the name of Christ, yet not at all to realize that He is the Living Son of the Father, or to have any anchor for our faith within us, so as to be fortified against the risk of future defection.

I will say a few words then under this impression, and with the reverent thoughts before me with which I began, by way of comment on our Saviour's weeping at Lazarus's grave; or, rather I will suggest what each of you may, please God, improve for himself.

What led our Lord to weep over the dead, who could at a word restore him, nay, had it in purpose so to do?

1. First of all, as the context informs us, He wept from very sympathy with the grief of others. "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." It is the very nature of compassion or sympathy, as the word implies, to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." We know it is so with men; and God tells us He also is compassionate, and full of tender mercy. Yet we do not well know what this means, for how can God rejoice or grieve? By the very perfection of His nature Almighty God cannot show sympathy, at least to the comprehension of beings of such limited minds as ours. He, indeed, is hid from us; but, if we were allowed to see Him, how could we discern in the Eternal and Unchangeable signs of sympathy? Words and works of sympathy He does display to us; but it is the very sight of sympathy in another that affects and comforts the sufferer more even than the fruits of it. Now we cannot see God's sympathy; and the Son of God, though feeling for us as great compassion as His Father,

did not show it to us while He remained in His Father's bosom. But when He took flesh and appeared on earth. He showed us the Godhead in a new manifestation, He invested Himself with a new set of attributes, those of our flesh, taking into Him a human soul and body, in order that thoughts, feelings, affections, might be His, which could respond to ours and certify to us His tender mercy. When, then, our Saviour weeps from sympathy at Mary's tears, let us not say it is the love of a man overcome by natural feeling. It is the love of God, the bowels of compassion of the Almighty and Eternal condescending to appear as we are capable of receiving it, in the form of human nature.

Jesus wept, therefore, not merely from the deep thoughts of His understanding, but from spontaneous tenderness; from the gentleness and mercy, the encompassing loving-kindness and exuberant fostering affection of the Son of God for His own work, the race of man. Their tears touched Him at once, as their miseries had brought Him down from heaven. His ear was open to them, and the sound of weeping went at once to His heart.

2. But next, we may suppose (if it is allowable to conjecture), that His pity, thus spontaneously excited, was led forward to dwell on the various circumstances in man's condition which excite pity. It was awakened and began to look around upon the miseries of the world. What was it He saw? He saw visibly displayed the *victory of death*; a mourning multitude,—every thing present which might waken sorrow except him who was the chief object of it. He was not,—a stone marked the place where he lay. Martha and Mary, whom he had known and loved in their brother's company now solitary, approached Him, first one and then the other, in far other mood and circumstance than heretofore,—in deep affliction; in faith indeed and resignation, yet, apparently, with somewhat of a tender complaint: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Such has been the judgment passed, or the doubt raised, concerning Him, in the breast of the creature in every age. Men have seen sin and misery around them, and, whether in faith or unbelief, have said, "If Thou hadst been here," if Thou hadst interfered, it might have been otherwise. Here, then, was the Creator surrounded by the works of His hands, who adored Him indeed, yet seemed to ask why He suffered what He Himself had made, so to be marred. Here was the Creator of the world at a scene of death, seeing the issue of his gracious handy-work. Would not He revert in thought to the hour of creation, when He went forth from the bosom of the Father to bring all things into existence? There had been a day when He had looked upon the work of his love, and seen that it was "very good." Whence had the good been turned to evil, the

fine gold become dim? "An enemy had done this." Why it was allowed, and how achieved, was a secret with Him; a secret from all who were about Him, as it is a secret to us at this day. Here He had incommunicable thoughts with His Eternal Father. He would not say why it was; He chose another course for taking away their doubts and complaints. "He opened not His mouth," but He wrought wondrously. What He has done for all believers, revealing His atoning death, yet not explaining it, this He did for Martha and Mary also, proceeding to the grave in silence, to raise their brother, while they complained that he had been allowed to die.

Here, then, I say, were abundant sources for His grief (if we may be permitted to trace them), in the contrast between Adam, in the day in which he was created, innocent and immortal, and man as the devil had made him, full of the poison of sin and the breath of the grave; and again, in the timid complaint of His sorrowing friends that that change had been permitted. And though He was about to turn back the scene of sorrow into joy again, yet, after all, Lazarus one day must die again,—He was but delaying the fulfilment of His own decree. A stone lay upon him now; and, though he was raised from the grave, yet, by His own inscrutable law, one day he must lie down again in it. It was a respite, not a resurrection.

3. Here I have suggested another thought which admits of being dwelt upon. Christ was come to do a deed of mercy, and it was a secret in His own breast. All the love which He felt for Lazarus was a secret from others. He was conscious to Himself He loved Him; but none could tell but He how earnest that affection was. Peter, when his love for Christ was doubted, found a relief in an appeal to Himself: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."* But Christ had no earthly friend who could be His confidant in this matter; and, as His thoughts turned on Lazarus and His heart yearned towards him, was He not in Joseph's case, who not in grief, but from the very fulness of his soul, and his desolateness in a heathen land, when his brethren stood before him, "sought where to weep," as if his own tears were his best companions, and had in them a sympathy to sooth his inward emotion? Was He not in the case of a parent hanging over an infant, and weeping upon it, from the very consciousness of its helplessness and insensibility to the love poured out upon it? But the parent weeps from the feeling of her weakness to defend it? knowing that what is now a child must grow up and take its own course, and (whether for earthly or heavenly good) must depend, not on her, but on the

* John xxi. 17.

Creator and on itself. Christ's was a different contemplation; yet attended with its own peculiar emotion. I mean the feeling that He *had* power to raise up Lazarus. Joseph wept, as having a secret, not only of the past, but of the future;—of good in store as well as of evil done,—of good which it was in his own power to confer. And our Lord and Saviour knew that, while all seemed so dreary and hopeless, in spite of the tears and laments of his friends, in spite of the corpse four days old, the grave and the stone which was upon it, He had a spell which could overcome death, and He was about to use it. Is there any time more affecting than when you are about to break good news to a friend who has been stricken down by tidings of ill?

4. Alas! there were other thoughts still to call forth His tears. This marvellous benefit to the forlorn sisters, how was it to be attained? at His own cost. Joseph knew he could bring joy to his brethren, but at no sacrifice of his own. Christ was bringing life to the dead by His own death. His disciples would have dissuaded Him from going into Judea, *lest* the Jews should kill Him. Their apprehension was fulfilled. He went to raise Lazarus, and the fame of that miracle was the immediate cause of His seizure and crucifixion. This He knew beforehand. He saw the prospect before Him; He saw Lazarus raised,—the supper in Martha's house,—Lazarus sitting at table,—joy on all sides of Him;—Mary honouring her Lord on this festive occasion by the outpouring of the very costly ointment upon His feet,—the Jews crowding, not only to see Him, but Lazarus also;—His triumphant entry into Jerusalem,—the multitude shouting Hosanna,—the people testifying to the raising of Lazarus,—the Greeks, who had come up to worship at the feast earnest to see Him,—the children joining in the general joy; and then the Pharisees plotting against Him, Judas betraying Him, His friends deserting Him, and the cross receiving Him. These things doubtless, among a multitude of thoughts unspeakable, passed over His mind. He felt that Lazarus was waking to life at His own sacrifice; that He was descending into the grave which Lazarus left. He felt that Lazarus was to live and He to die; the appearance of things was to be reversed; the feast was to be kept in Martha's house, but the last passover of sorrow remained for Him. And He knew that this reverse was altogether voluntary with Him. He had come down from His Father's bosom to be an Atonement of blood for all sin, and thereby to raise all believers from the grave, as He was then about to raise Lazarus; and to raise them, not for a time, but for eternity; and now the sharp trial lay before Him, through which He was to "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Contemplating then the fulness of His purpose while going about a single act of mercy, He said to

Martha, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die."

Let us take to ourselves these comfortable thoughts, both in the contemplation of our own death or upon the death of our friends. Wherever faith in Christ is, there is Christ Himself. He said to Martha, "Believest thou this?" Wherever there is a heart to answer, "Lord, I believe," there Christ is present. There our Lord vouchsafes to stand, though unseen,—whether over the bed of death or over the grave: whether we ourselves are sinking, or those who are dear to us. Blessed be His name! nothing can rob us of this consolation: we will be as certain, through His grace, that He is standing over us in love as though we saw Him. We will not, after our experience of Lazarus's history, doubt an instant that He is thoughtful about us. He knows the beginnings of our illness, though He keeps at a distance. He knows when to remain away and when to draw near. He notes down the advances of it, and the stages. He tells truly when His friend Lazarus is sick and when he sleeps. We all have experience of this in the narrative before us, and henceforth, so be it! will never complain at the course of His providence. Only, we will beg of Him an increase of faith; a more lively perception of the curse under which the world lies, and of our own personal demerits; a more understanding view of the mystery of His cross, a more devout and implicit reliance on the virtue of it, and a more confident persuasion that He will never put upon us more than we can bear, never afflict His brethren with any wo except for their own highest benefit.

SERMON XI.

BODILY SUFFERING.

COLOSSIANS i. 24.

I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church.

OUR Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came by blood as well as by water, not only as a Fount of grace and truth, the source of spiritual light, joy, and salvation, but as a combatant with Sin and Satan, who was "consecrated through suffering." He was, as prophecy had marked Him out, "red in His apparel, and His garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat;" or, in the words of the Apostle, "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." It was the untold sufferings of the Eternal Word in our nature, His body dislocated and torn, His blood poured out, His soul violently separated by a painful death, which has put away from us the wrath of Him whose love sent Him for that very purpose. This only was our Atonement; no one shared in the work. He "trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him." When lifted up upon the cursed tree, He fought with all the hosts of evil, and conquered by suffering.

Thus, in a most mysterious way, all that is needful for this sinful world, the life of our souls, the regeneration of our nature, all that is most joyful and glorious, hope, light, peace, spiritual freedom, holy influences, religious knowledge and strength, all flow from a fount of blood. A work of blood is our salvation; and we, as we would be saved, must draw near and gaze upon it in faith, and accept it as the way to heaven. We must take Him, who thus suffered, as our guide; we must embrace His sacred feet, and follow Him. No wonder, then, should we receive on ourselves some drops of the sacred agony which bedewed His garments; no wonder, should we be sprinkled with the sorrows which He bore in expiation of our sins!

And so it has ever been in very deed; to approach Him has been, from the first, to be partaker, more or less, in his sufferings; I do not

say in the case of every individual who believes in Him, but as regards the more conspicuous, the more favoured, His choice instruments, and His most active servants ; that is, it has been the lot of the Church on the whole, and of those on the whole who had been most like Him, as Rulers, Intercessors, and Teachers of the Church. He, indeed, alone meritoriously ; they, because they have been near Him. Thus, immediately upon His birth, He brought the sword upon the infants of His own age at Bethlehem. His very shadow, cast upon a city where He did not abide, was stained with blood. His Blessed Mother had not clasped Him to her breast for many weeks, ere she was warned of the penalty of that fearful privilege : “ Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.”* Virtue went out of Him ; but the water and the blood flowed together as afterwards from His pierced side. From among the infants He took up in His arms to bless, is said to have gone forth a chief martyr of the generation after Him. Most of his Apostles passed through life-long sufferings to a violent death. In particular, when the favoured brothers, James and John, came to Him with a request that they might sit beside Him in His kingdom, He plainly stated this connection between nearness to Him and affliction. “ Are ye able,” He said, “ to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ?”† As if He said, “ Ye cannot have the sacraments of grace without the painful figures of them. The Cross, when imprinted on your foreheads, will draw blood. You shall receive indeed the baptism of the Spirit, and the cup of My communion, but it shall be with the attendant pledges of My cup of agony and My baptism of blood.” Elsewhere He speaks the same language to all who would partake the benefits of His death and passion : “ Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.”‡

Accordingly, His Apostles frequently remind us of this necessary, though mysterious appointment, and bid us “ think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, as though some strange thing happened unto us, but to rejoice in having communion with the sufferings of Christ.”§ St. Paul teaches us the same lesson in the text, in which he speaks of taking up the remnant of Christ’s sorrows, as some precious mantle dropt from the Cross, and wearing it for His sake. “ I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what remains of the afflictions of Christ for His body’s sake, that is the Church.”|| And, though he is speaking especially of persecution and other sufferings

* Luke ii. 35.

† Matt. xx. 22.

‡ Luke xiv. 27.

§ 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13.

Vide also 2 Cor. iv. 10.

borne in the cause of the Gospel, yet it is our great privilege, as Scripture tells us, that all pain and trouble, borne in faith and patience, will be accounted as marks of Christ, grace tokens from the absent Saviour, and will be accepted and rewarded for His sake at the last day. It declares generally, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

Thus the Gospel, which has shed light in so many ways upon the state of this world, has aided especially our view of the *sufferings* to which human nature is subjected; turning a punishment into a privilege, in the case of all pain, and especially of bodily pain, which is the most mysterious of all. Sorrow, anxiety, and disappointment are more or less connected with sin and sinners; but bodily pain is involuntary for the most part, stretching over the world by some external irresistible law, reaching to children who have never actually sinned, and to the brute animals, who are strangers to Adam's nature, while in its manifestations it is far more piteous and distressing than any other suffering. It is the lot of all of us, sooner or later; and that, perhaps in a measure which it would be appalling and wrong to anticipate, whether from disease, or from the casualties of life. And all of us, at length must die; and death is generally ushered in by disease, and ends in that separation of soul and body, which itself may, in some cases, involve peculiar pain.

Wordly men put such thoughts aside as gloomy; they can neither deny nor avert the prospect before them; and they are wise, on their own principles, not to embitter the present by anticipating it. But Christians may bear to look at it without undue apprehension; for this very infliction, which most touches the heart and imagination, has (as I have said) been invested by Almighty God with a new and comfortable light, as being the medium of His choicest mercies towards us. Pain is no longer a curse, a necessary evil to be undergone with a dry submission or passive endurance,—it may be considered even as a blessing of the Gospel, and being a blessing, admits of being met well or ill. In the way of nature, indeed, it seems to shut out the notion of duty, as if so masterful a discipline from without superseded the necessity or opportunity of self-mastery; but now that "Christ hath suffered in the flesh,"

* Is. xliii. 2. 2 Cor. iv 17.

we are bound "to arm ourselves with the same mind," and to obey, as He did, amid suffering.

In what follows, I shall remark, briefly, first, on the natural effect of pain upon the mind; and next, upon the remedies and correctives of that effect which the knowledge of the Gospel supplies.

1. Now, as to its effect upon the mind, let it be well understood that it has no sanctifying influence in itself. Bad men are made worse by it. This should be borne in mind, lest we deceive ourselves; for sometimes we speak (at least the poor often so speak) as though present hardship and suffering were in some sense a ground of confidence in themselves as to our future prospects, whether as expiating our sins or bringing our hearts nearer to God. Nay, even the more religious among us may be misled to think that pain makes them better than it really does; for the effect of it at length, on any but very proud or ungovernable tempers, is to cause a languor and composure of mind, which looks like resignation, while it necessarily throws our reason upon the especial *thought* of God, our only stay in such times of trial. Doubtless it does really benefit the Christian, and in no scanty measure; and he may thank God who thus blesses it; only let him be cautious of *measuring* his spiritual state by the particular exercise of faith and love in his heart at the time, especially if that exercise be limited to the affections themselves, and have no opportunity of showing itself in works. St. Paul speaks of chastisement "yielding *afterwards* the peaceable fruit of righteousness,"* formed indeed and ripened at the moment, but manifested in due season. This may be the real fruit of the suffering of a death bed, even though it may not have time to show itself to others before the Christian departs hence. Surely we may humbly hope that it perfects habits hitherto but partially formed, and blends the several graces of the Spirit more entirely. Such is the issue of it in *established* Christians;—but it *may* possibly effect nothing so blessed. Nay, in the case of those who have followed Christ with but a half heart, it may be a trial too strong for their feebleness, and may overpower them. This is a dreadful reflection for those who put off the day of repentance. Well does our Church pray for us: "Suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death to fall from Thee!" As for unbelievers, we know how it affects them, from such serious passages of Scripture as the following: "They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."†

Nay, I would go so far as to say, not only that pain does not com-

* Heb. xii. 11.

† Rev. xvi. 10, 11.

monly improve us, but that without care it has a strong tendency to do our souls harm, viz. by making us selfish; an effect produced, even when it does us good in other ways. Weak health, for instance, instead of opening the heart, often makes a man supremely careful of his bodily ease and well-being. Men find an excuse in their infirmities for some extraordinary attention to their comforts; they consider they may fairly consult, on all occasions, their own convenience rather than that of another. They indulge their wayward wishes, allow themselves in indolence when they really might exert themselves, and think they may be fretful because they are weak. They become querulous, self-willed, fastidious, and egotistical. Bystanders, indeed, should be very cautious of thinking any particular sufferer to be thus minded, because, after all, sick people have a multitude of feelings which they cannot explain to any one else, and are often in the right in those matters in which they appear to others most fanciful or unreasonable. Yet this does not interfere with the correctness of my remark on the whole.

Take another instance under very different circumstances. If bodily suffering can be presented under distinct aspects, it is in the lassitude of a sick-bed and in the hardships of the soldier's life. Yet, of the latter we find selfishness almost a proverbial characteristic. Surely the life of soldiers on service is a very school of generosity and self-neglect, if rightly understood, and is used as such by the noble and high-principled; yet here, a low and carnal mind, instead of profiting by its advantages, will yield to the temptation of referring every thing that befalls it to its own comfort and profit. To secure its own interests, will become enshrined within it as its main duty, and with the greater plausibility, inasmuch as there is a sense in which it may really be so accounted. Others (it will suggest) must take care of themselves; it is a folly and weakness to think of them; there are but few chances of safety; the many must suffer, some unto death; it is wisdom to struggle for life and comfort, and to dismiss the thought of others. Alas! instances occur, every now and then, in the experience of life, which show that such thoughts and feelings are not peculiar to any one class of men, but are the actuating principles of the multitude. If an alarm of danger be given amid a crowd, the general eagerness for safety leads men to act towards each other with utter unconcern, if not with frantic cruelty. There are stories told of companies of men finding themselves at sea with scanty provisions, and of the shocking deeds which followed, when each was struggling to preserve his own life.

The natural effect, then, of pain and fear, is to individualize us in our own minds, to fix our thoughts on ourselves, to make us selfish. It is

through pain, chiefly, that we realize to ourselves even our bodily organs; a frame entirely without painful sensations is (as it were) one whole without parts, and prefigures that future spiritual body which shall be the portion of the Saints. And to this we most approximate in our youth, when we are not sensible that we are compacted of gross terrestrial matter, as advancing years convince us. The young reflect little upon themselves, they gaze around them, and live out of doors, and say they have souls, little understanding their words. "They rejoice in their youth." This, then, is the effect of suffering, that it arrests us: that it, as it were, puts a finger upon us to ascertain for us our own individuality. But it does no more than this; if such a warning does not lead us through the stirrings of our conscience heavenwards, it does but imprison us in ourselves and make us selfish.

2. Here, then, it is that the Gospel finds us; heirs to a visitation, which, sooner or later, comes upon us, turning our thoughts from outward objects, and so tempting us to idolize self, to the dishonour of that God whom we ought to worship, and the neglect of man whom we should love as ourselves. Thus it finds us, and it obviates this danger, not by removing pain, but by giving it new associations. Pain, which by nature leads us only to ourselves, carries on the Christian mind from the thought of self to the contemplation of Christ, His passion, His merits, and His pattern; and, thence, further to that united company of sufferers who follow Him and "are what He is in this world." He is the great Object of our faith; and, while we gaze upon Him, we learn to forget ourselves.

Surely that is not the most fearful and hateful of evils, here below, however trying to the flesh, which Christ underwent voluntarily. No one chooses evil for its own sake, but for the greater good wrought out through it. He underwent it as for ends greater than the immediate removal of it, "not grudgingly or of necessity," but cheerfully doing God's will, as the Gospel history sets before us. When His time was come, we are told, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." His disciples said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" but He persisted. Again, He said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly." He proceeded to the garden beyond Cedron, though Judas knew the place; and when the band of officers came to seize Him, "He went forth, and said unto them, I am He."* [And with what calmness and majesty did He bear His sufferings, when they came upon Him, though by His agony in the garden He showed He fully felt their keenness! The Psalmist, in his

* Luke ix. 51. John xi. 8; xiii. 27; xviii. 2. 4, 5.

prediction of them, says, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax, it is melted;"* describing, as it would seem, that sinking of spirit and enfeebling of nerve which severe pain causes. Yet, in the midst of distress which seemed to preclude the opportunity of obedience, He was "about His Father's business," even more diligently than when in His childhood He asked questions of the doctors in the Temple; not thinking to be merely passive under the trial, but accounting it as if a great occasion for a noble and severe surrender of Himself to His Father's will. Thus He "learned obedience by the things that He suffered."† Consider the deep and serene compassion which led Him to pray for those who crucified Him; His solicitous care of His mother; and His pardoning words addressed to the robber who suffered with Him. And so, when He said, "It is finished," He showed that He was still contemplating, with a clear intellect, "the travail of His soul, and was satisfied;" and in the solemn surrender of Himself into His Father's hand, He showed where His mind rested in the midst of its darkness. Even when He seemed to be thinking of Himself, and said, "I thirst," He really was regarding the words of prophecy, and was bent on vindicating, to the very letter, the divine announcements concerning Him.

‡ Thus, upon the Cross itself, we discern in Him the mercy of a Messenger from heaven, the love and grace of a Saviour, the dutifulness of a Son, the faith of a created nature, and the zeal of a servant of God. His mind was stayed upon His Father's sovereign will and infinite perfections, yet could pass, without effort, to the claim of filial duty, or the need of an individual sinner. Six out of His seven last words were words of faith and love. For one instant a horrible dread overwhelmed Him, when He seemed to ask why God had forsaken Him. Doubtless "that voice was for our sakes;" as when He made mention of His thirst; and, like the other, was taken from inspired prophecy. Perhaps it was intended to set before us an example of a special trial to which human nature is subject, whatever was the real and inscrutable manner of it in Him, who was all along supported by an inherent Divinity; I mean the trial of sharp agony, hurrying the mind on to vague terrors and strange inexplicable thoughts; and is, therefore, graciously recorded, for our benefit, in the history of His death, "who was tempted, in all points, like as we are, yet without sin."†

Such, then, were our Lord's sufferings, voluntarily undergone, and ennobled by an active obedience; themselves the centre of our hopes and worship, yet borne without thought of self, towards God and, for

* Psalms xxii. 14.

† Heb. iv. 15.

man. And who, among us, habitually dwells upon them, but is led, without deliberate purpose, by the very warmth of gratitude and adoring love, to attempt bearing his own inferior trials in the same heavenly mind? Who does not see, that to bear pain well, is to meet it courageously, not to shrink or waver, but to pray for God's help, then to look at it steadfastly, to summon what nerve we have of mind and body, to receive its attack, and to bear up against it (while strength is given us) as against some visible enemy in close combat? Who will not acknowledge that, when sent to us, we must make its presence (as it were) our own voluntary act, by the cheerful and ready concurrence of our own will with the will of God? Nay, who is there but must own that with Christ's sufferings before us, pain and tribulation are, after all, not only the most blessed, but even the most congruous attendants upon those who are called to inherit the benefit of them? Most congruous, I say, not as though necessary, but as most natural and befitting, harmonizing, most fully, with the main Object in the group of sacred wonders on which the Church is called to gaze. Who, on the other hand, does not at least perceive that all the glare and gaudiness of this world, its excitements, its keenly pursued goods, its successes and its transports, its pomps and its luxuries, are not in character with that pale and solemn scene which faith must ever have in its eye? What Christian will not own that to "reign as kings," and to be "full," is not his calling; so as to derive comfort in the hour of sickness, or bereavement, or other affliction, from the thought that he is now in his own place, if he be Christ's, in his true home, the sepulchre in which his Lord was laid? So deeply have His saints felt this, that, when times were peaceful and the Church was in safety, they could not rest in the lap of ease, and have secured to themselves hardnances, lest the world should corrupt them. They could not bear to see the much-enduring Paul adding to his necessary tribulations a self-inflicted chastisement of the flesh, and yet allow themselves to live delicately, and fare sumptuously every day. They saw the image of Christ reflected in tears and blood, in the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, and the noble army of Martyrs; they read in prophecy of the doom of the Church as "a woman fed by God in the wilderness,"* and her witnesses as "clothed in sackcloth;" and they could not believe that they were meant for nothing more than to enjoy the pleasures of this life, however innocent and moderate might be their use of them. Without deciding about their neighbours, they felt themselves called to higher things; their own sense of the duty

* Vide Rev. xii. 6; xi. 3.

became the sanction and witness of it. They considered that God at least would afflict them in His love, if they spared themselves ever so much. The thorn in the flesh, the buffetings of Satan, the bereavement of their eyes, these were their portion; and in common prudence, were there no higher thought, they could not live out of time and measure with these expected visitations. With no superstitious alarms, or cowardly imagination, or senseless hurrying into difficulty or trial, but calmly and in faith, they surrendered themselves into His hands who had told them in His inspired word that affliction was to be their familiar food; till at length they gained that distaste for the luxuries of life as to be impatient of them from their very fullness of grace. Even in our latter days, when "the fine gold has become dim," such has been the mind of those we most revere.* But such was it especially in primitive times. It was the temper too of such of the Apostles as were removed, more than their brethren, from the world's buffetings; as if the prospect of suffering afterwards were no dispensation for a present self-inflicted discipline, or rather demanded it. St. James the Less was Bishop of Jerusalem, and was highly venerated for his uprightness by the unbelieving Jews among whom he lived unmolested. We are told that he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat any animal food, nor indulge in the luxury of the bath. "So often was he in the Temple on his knees, that they were thin and hard by his continual supplication."† Thus he kept his "loins girded about and his lamp burning," for the blessed martyrdom which was to end his course. Could it be otherwise? How could the great Apostle, sitting at home by his Lord's decree, "nourish his heart," as he calls it, "as for the slaughter!" How could he eat and drink and live as other men, when "the Ark, and Israel, and Judah were in tents," encamped in the open fields, and one by one, God's chosen warriors were falling before the brief triumph of Satan! How could he be "delicate on the earth and wanton," when Paul and Barnabas, Peter too and John were in stripes and prisons, in labours and perils, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness! Stephen had led the army of Martyrs in Jerusalem itself, which was his own post of service. James, the brother of John, had followed him in the same city; he first of the Apostles tasting our Lord's cup, who had unwittingly asked to drink it. And if this was the feeling of the Apostles, when in temporary safety, why is it not ours, who altogether live at ease, except that we have not faith enough to realize

* "It is a most miserable state for a man to have every thing according to his desire, and quietly to enjoy the pleasures of life. There needs no more to expose him to eternal misery."—*Bishop Wilson—Sacra Privata. Wednesday.*

† Euseb. Hist. ii. 23.

what is past? Could we see the Cross upon Calvary, and the list of sufferers who resisted unto blood in the times that followed it, is it possible that we should feel surprise when pain overtook us, or impatience at its continuance? Is it strange though we are smitten by ever so new a plague? Is it grievous that the Cross presses on one nerve or limb ever so many years till hope of relief is gone? Is it, indeed, not possible with the Apostle to rejoice in "bearing in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus? And much more, can we, for very shame's sake, suffer ourselves to be troubled at what is but ordinary pain, to be irritated or saddened, made gloomy or anxious by inconveniences which never could surprise or unsettle those who had studied and understood their place as servants of a crucified Lord?

Let us then determine with cheerful hearts to sacrifice unto the Lord our God our comforts and pleasures, however innocent, when He calls for them, whether for the purposes of His Church or in His own inscrutable Providence. Let us lend to Him a few short hours of present ease, and we shall receive our own with abundant usury in the day of His coming. There is a Treasurer in heaven stored with such offerings as the natural man abhors; with sighs and tears, wounds and blood, torture and death. The Martyrs first began the contribution, and we all may follow them; all of us, for every suffering, great or little, may, like the widow's mite, be sacrificed in faith to Him who sent it. Christ gave us the words of consecration, when He for an ensample said, "Thy will be done." Henceforth as the Apostle speaks, we may "glory in tribulation," as the seed of future glory.

Meanwhile, let us never forget in all we suffer that, properly speaking, our own sin is the cause of it, and it is only by Christ's mercy that we are allowed to range ourselves at His side. We who are children of wrath, are made through Him children of grace; and our pains, which are in themselves but foretastes of hell, are changed by the sprinkling of His blood into a preparation for heaven.

SERMON XII.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE ETERNAL SON.

HEBREWS v. 7, 8.

Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.

THE chief mystery of our holy faith is the humiliation of the Son of God to temptation and suffering, as described in this passage of Scripture. In truth, it is a more overwhelming mystery even than that which is involved in the doctrine of the Trinity. I say, more overwhelming, not greater, for we cannot measure the more and the less in subjects utterly incomprehensible and divine; but with more in it to perplex and subdue our minds. When the mystery of the Trinity is set before us, we see indeed that it is quite beyond our reason; but, at the same time, it is no wonder that human language should be unable to convey, and human intellect to receive, truths relating to the incommunicable and infinite essence of Almighty God. But the mystery of the Incarnation relates, in part, to subjects more level with our reason; it lies not only in the manner how God and man is one Christ, but in the very fact that so it is. We think we know of God so much as this, that He is altogether separate from imperfection and infirmity; yet we are told that the Eternal Son has taken into Himself a creature's nature, which henceforth became as much one with Him, as much belonged to Him, as the divine attributes and powers which He had ever had. The mystery lies as much in what we think we know, as in what we do not know. Reflect, for instance, upon the language of the text. The Son of God, who "had glory with the Father" from everlasting, was found, at a certain time, in human flesh, offering up prayers and supplications to Him, crying out and weeping, and exercising obedience in suffering!

Do not suppose, from my thus speaking, that I would put the doctrine before you as a hard saying, as a stumbling-block, and a yoke of

bondage, to which you must perforce submit, however unwillingly. Far be it from us to take such unthankful account of a dispensation which has brought us salvation! Those who see in the Cross of Christ the Atonement for sin, cannot choose but glory in it; and its mysteriousness does but make them glory in it the more. They boast of it before men and Angels, before an unbelieving world, and before fallen spirits, with no confusion of face, but with a reverent boldness they confess this miracle of grace, and cherish it in their creed, though it gains them but the contempt and derision of the proud and ungodly.

And as the doctrine of our Lord's humiliation is most mysterious, so the very surface of the narrative in which it is contained is mysterious also, as exciting wonder, and impressing upon us our real ignorance of the nature, manner, and causes of it. Take, for instance, His temptation. Why was it undergone at all, seeing our redemption is ascribed to His death, not to it? Why was it so long? What took place during it? What was Satan's particular object in tempting Him? How came Satan to have such power over Him as to be able to transport Him from place to place? and what was the precise result of the temptation? These and many other questions admit of no satisfactory solution. There is something remarkable too in the period of it, being the same as that of the long fasts of Moses and Elijah, and of His own abode on earth after His resurrection. A like mystery again is cast around that last period of His earthly mission. Then He was engaged we know not how, except that He appeared, from time to time, to His Apostles; of the forty days of His temptation we know still less, only that "He did eat nothing," and "was with the wild beasts."*

Again, there is something of mystery in the connection of this temptation with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him on His baptism. After the voice from Heaven had proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," "*immediately*," as St. Mark says, "the Spirit *driveth* Him into the wilderness." As if there were some connection, beyond our understanding, between His baptism and temptation, the first act of the Holy Spirit is forthwith to "drive Him" (whatever is meant by the word) into the wilderness. Observe, too, that it was almost from this solemn recognition, "This is My beloved Son," that the Devil took up the temptation, "*If* Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread;"† yet what his thoughts and designs were we cannot even conjecture. All we see is a renewal, apparently, of Adam's temptation, in the person of the "second man."

* Luke iv. 2. Mark i. 13.

† Matt. iv. 3.

In like manner, questions might be asked concerning His descent into hell, which could as little be solved, with our present limited knowledge of the nature and means of His gracious Economy.

I bring together these various questions in order to impress upon you our depth of ignorance on the entire subject under review. The dispensation of mercy is revealed to us in its great and blessed result, our redemption, and in one or two other momentous points. On all these we ought to dwell and enlarge, mindfully and thankfully, but with the constant recollection that after all, as regards the dispensation itself, but one or two partial notices are revealed to us altogether of a great Divine Work. Enlarge upon them we ought, even because they are few and partial, not slighting what is given us, because it is not all, like the servant who buried his lord's talent, but giving it what increase we can. And as there is much danger of the narrow spirit of that slothful servant at the present day, in which is strangely combined a profession of knowing every thing, with an assertion that there is nothing to know concerning the Incarnation, I propose now, by God's blessing, to set before you the Scripture doctrine concerning it, as the Church Catholic has ever received it; trading with the talent committed to us, so that when our Lord comes He may receive his own with usury.

Bearing in mind, then, that we know nothing truly about the manner or the ultimate ends of the humiliation of the Eternal Son, our Lord and Saviour, let us consider what that humiliation itself was.

The text says, "though He were a Son." Now, in these words, "the Son of God," much more is implied than at first sight may appear. Many a man gathers up, here and there, some fragments of religious knowledge. He hears one thing said in Church, he sees another thing in the Prayer-book; and among religious people, or in the world, he gains something more. In this way he gets possession of sacred words and statements, knowing very little about them really. He interprets them, as it may happen, according to the various and inconsistent opinions which he has met with; or he puts his own meaning upon them, that is, the meaning, as must needs be, of an untaught, not to say a carnal and irreverent mind. How can a man expect he shall discern and apprehend the real meaning of the language of Scripture, if he has never approached it as a learner, and waited on the Divine Author of it for the gift of wisdom? By continual meditation on the sacred text, by diligent use of the Church's instruction, he will come to understand what the Gospel doctrines are; but, most surely, if all the knowledge he has, be gathered from a sentence caught up here, and an argument heard there, even when he is most orthodox in word, he has

but a collection of phrases, on which he puts not the right meaning, but his own meaning. And the least reflection must show you what a very poor and unworthy meaning, or rather how false a meaning, "the natural man" will put upon "the things of the Spirit of God." I have been led to say this from having used the words, "the Son of God," which, I much fear, convey, to a great many minds, little or no idea, little or no high, religious, solemn idea. We have, perhaps a vague general notion that they mean something extraordinary and supernatural; but we know that we ourselves are called, in one sense, sons of God in Scripture. Moreover we have heard, perhaps, (and even though we do not recollect it, yet may retain the impression of it,) that the Angels are sons of God. In consequence, we collect just thus much from the title as applied to our Lord, that He came from God, that He was the well-beloved of God, and that He is much more than a mere man. This is all that the words convey to many men at the most; while many more refer them merely to His human nature. How different is the state of those who have been duly initiated into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven! How different was the mind of the primitive Christians, who so eagerly and vigorously apprehended the gracious announcement, that in this title, "the Son of God," they saw and enjoyed the full glories of the Gospel doctrine! When times grew cold and unbelieving, then indeed, as at this day, public explanations were necessary of those simple and sacred words; but the first Christians needed none. They felt that in saying that Christ was the Son of God, they were witnessing to a thousand marvellous and salutary truths, which they could not indeed understand, but by which they might gain life, and for which they could dare to die.

What, then, is meant by the "Son of God?" It is meant that our Lord is the very or true Son of God, that is, His Son by nature. We are but *called* the sons of God,—we are adopted to be sons,—but our Lord and Saviour is the Son of God, really and by birth, and He alone is such. Hence Scripture calls Him the Only-begotten Son. "Such knowledge is too excellent for" us; yet, however high it be, we know from His own mouth that God is not solitary, if we may dare so to speak, but that in His own incomprehensible Essence, in the perfection of His one indivisible and eternal nature, His Dearly-beloved Son has ever existed with Him, who is called the Word, and being His Son, is partaker in all the fulness of His Godhead. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Thus when the early Christians used the title, "the Son of God," they meant, after the manner of the Apostles when they use it in Scripture, all we mean in the Creed, when, by way of explaining ourselves, we confess

Him to be "God from God, Light from Light, Very or True God from True God." For in that He is the Son of God, He must be whatever God is, all holy, all wise, all powerful, all good, eternal, infinite; yet since there is only one God, He must be at the same time not separate from God, but ever one with and in Him, one indivisibly,—so that it would be as idle language to speak of Him as separated in essence from His Father, as to say that our reason, or intellect, or will, was separate from our minds,—as rash and profane language to deny to the Father His Only-begotten Word, in whom He has ever delighted, as to deny His Wisdom, or Goodness, or Power, which also have been in and with Him from everlasting.

The text goes on to say: "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Obedience belongs to a servant, but concurrence, accordance, co-operation, are the characteristics of a Son. In His eternal union with God there was no distinction of will and work between Him and His Father; as the Father's life was the Son's life, and the Father's glory the Son's also, so the Son was the very Word and Wisdom of the Father, His Power and Co-equal Minister in all things, the same and not the same as He Himself. But in the days of His flesh, when He had humbled Himself to "the form of a servant," taking on Himself a separate will and a separate work, and the toil and sufferings incident to a creature, then what had been mere concurrence became obedience. This, then, is the force of the words, "Though He was a Son, yet had He experience of *obedience*." He took on Him a lower nature, and wrought in it towards a will higher and more perfect than it. Further, "He learned obedience amid *suffering*," and, therefore, amid temptation. His mysterious agony under it is described in the former part of the text; which declares that "in the days of His flesh," He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Or, in the words of the foregoing chapter, He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

I am only concerned here in setting before you the sacred truth itself, not how it was, or why, or with what results. Let us, then, reverently consider what is implied in it. "The Word was made flesh; by which is meant, not that he selected some particular existing man and dwelt in Him, (which in no sense would answer to the force of those words, and which He condescends to do continually in the case of all His elect, through His Spirit,) but that He became what He was not before, that he took into His own Infinite Essence man's nature itself, in all its original fulness, creating a soul and body, and, at the moment of crea-

tion, making them His own, so that they never were other than His, never existed by themselves or except as in Him, being properties or attributes of Him (to use defective words,) as really as His divine goodness, or His eternal Sonship, or His perfect likeness to the Father. And, while thus adding a new nature to Himself, He did not in any respect cease to be what He was before. How was that possible? All the while He was on earth, when He was conceived, when He was born, when He was tempted, on the cross, in the grave, and now at God's right hand,—all the time through, He was the Eternal and Unchangeable Word, the Son of God. The flesh which he had assumed was but the instrument through which He acted for and towards us. As He acts in creation by His wisdom and power, towards Angels by His love, towards devils by His wrath, so He has acted for our redemption through our own nature, which in His great mercy He attached to His own person, as if an attribute, simply, absolutely, indissolubly! Thus St. Paul speaks,—as in other places, of the love of God, and the holiness of God,—so in one place expressly of “the blood of God,” if I may venture to use such words out of the sacred context. “Feed the Church of God,” he says to the elders of Ephesus, “which He hath purchased with *His own* blood.”* Accordingly, whatever our Lord said or did upon earth was strictly and literally the word and deed of God Himself. Just as we speak of seeing our friends, though we do not see their souls but merely their bodies, so the Apostles, Disciples, Priests, and Pharisees, and the multitude, all who saw Christ in the flesh, saw, as the whole earth will see at the last day, the Very and Eternal Son of God.

After this manner, then, must be understood His suffering, temptation, and obedience, not as if He ceased to be what He had ever been, but having clothed Himself with a created essence, He made it the instrument of His humiliation; He acted in it, He obeyed and suffered through it. Do not we see among men, circumstances of a peculiar kind throw one of our own race out of himself, so that he, the same man, acts as if his usual self were not in being, and he had fresh feelings and faculties, for the occasion, higher or lower than before? Far be it from our thoughts to parallel the incarnation of the Eternal Word with such an accidental change! but I mention it not to explain a Mystery (which I relinquished the thought of from the first,) but to facilitate your *conception* of Him who is the subject of it, to help you towards contemplating Him as God and man at once, as still the Son of God though He had assumed a nature short of His original perfection. That Eternal Mind, which, till then, had thought and acted as

* Acts **xx.** 28.

God, began to think and act as a man, with all man's faculties, affections, and imperfections, sin excepted. Before he came on earth He was infinitely above joy and grief, fear and doubt, pain and ignorance ; but afterwards all these properties and many more were his as fully as they are ours. Before He came on earth, he had but the perfections of God, but afterwards He had also the virtues of a creature, such as faith, meekness, self-denial. Before he came on earth He could not be tempted of evil ; but afterwards He had a man's heart, a man's tears, and a man's wants and infirmities. His Divine Nature indeed pervaded His manhood, so that every deed and word of His in the flesh savoured of eternity and infinity ; but on the other hand, from the time he was born of the Virgin Mary, he had a natural fear of danger, a natural shrinking from pain, though ever subject to the ruling influence of that Holy and Eternal Essence which was in Him. For instance, we read on one occasion of His praying that the cup might pass from Him ; and, at another, when Peter showed surprise at the prospect of His crucifixion, He rebuked him sharply as if for tempting Him to murmur and disobey.

Thus He possessed at once a double assemblage of attributes, divine and human. Still He was all-powerful, though in the form of a servant ; still He was all knowing, though partially ignorant ; still incapable of temptation, though exposed to it ; and if any one stumble at this, as not a mere mystery, but in the very form of language a contradiction of terms, I would have him reflect on those peculiarities of human nature itself, which were just now hinted at. Let him consider the condition of his own mind, and see how like a contradiction it is. Let him reflect upon the faculty of memory, and try to determine whether he does or does not know a thing which he cannot recollect, or rather, whether it may not be said of him, that one self-same person that in one sense he knows it, in another he does not know it. This may serve to appease his imagination, if it startles at the mystery. Or let him consider the state of an infant, which seems, indeed, to be without a soul for many months, which seems to have only the senses and functions of animal life, yet has, we know, a soul which may even be regenerated. What, indeed, can be more mysterious than the Baptism of an infant ? How strange is it, yet how transporting a sight, what a source of meditation is opened on us, while we look upon what seems so helpless, so reasonless, and know that at that moment it has a soul so fully formed, as on the one hand, indeed, to be a child of wrath ; and on the other (blessed be God) to be capable of a new birth through the Spirit ? Who can say, if we had eyes to see, in what state that infant soul is ? Who can say it has not its energies of reason and of will in some unknown sphere, quite consistently with the reality of its

insensibility to the external world? Who can say that all of us, or at least all who are living in the faith of Christ, have not some strange but unconscious life in God's presence all the while we are here,—seeing what we do not know we see, impressed yet without power of reflection,—and this, without having a double self in consequence, and with an increase to us, not a diminution, of the practical reality of our earthly sojourn and probation? Are there not men before now who, like Elisha, when his spirit followed Gehazi, or St. Peter when he announced the coming of Sapphira's bearers, or St. Paul when his presence went before him to Corinth,* seem to range beyond themselves, even while in the flesh? Who knows where he is “in visions of the night?” And this being so, how can we pronounce it to be any contradiction that, while the Word of God was upon earth, in our flesh, compassed within and without with human virtues and feelings, with faith and patience, fear and joy, doubt, misgivings, infirmities, temptations, still He was, according to His Divine Nature, as from the first, passing in thought from one end of heaven even to the other, reading all hearts, foreseeing all events, and receiving all worship as in the bosom of the Father? This, indeed, is what He suggests to us Himself in those surprising words addressed to Nicodemus, which imply that even His human nature was at that very time in heaven while He spoke to him. “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man *which is in heaven.*”†

To conclude, if any one is tempted to consider such subjects as the foregoing, abstract, speculative, and unprofitable, I would observe, in answer, that I have taken it on the very ground of its being, as I believe, especially practical. Let it not be thought a strange thing to say, though I say it, that there is much in the religious belief, even of the more serious part of the community at present, to make observant men very anxious where it will end. It would be no very difficult matter, I suspect, to perplex the faith of a great many persons who believe themselves to be orthodox, and indeed are so according to their light. They have been accustomed to call Christ, God, but that is all; they have not considered what is meant by applying that title to one who was really a man, and from the vague way in which they use it, they would be in no small danger, if assailed by a subtle disputant, of being robbed of the sacred truth in its substance, even if they kept it in name. In truth, until we contemplate our Lord and Saviour, God and man, as a really existing being, external to our minds, as complete and entire in His personality as we appear to be to each other, as one

* 2 Kings v. 26. Acts v. 9. 1 Cor. iv. 19. v. 3.

† John iii. 13.

and the same in all His various and contrary attributes, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," we are using words which profit not. Till then we do not realize that Object of faith, which is not a mere name on which titles and properties may be affixed without congruity and meaning, but has a personal existence and an identity distinct from every thing else. In what true sense do we "know" Him, if our idea of Him be not such as to take up and incorporate into itself the manifold attributes and offices which we ascribe to Him? What do we gain from words, however correct and abundant, if they end with themselves, instead of lighting up the image of the incarnate Son in our hearts? Yet this charge may too surely be brought against the theology of late centuries, which, under the pretence of guarding against presumption, denies us what is revealed; like Ahaz, refusing to ask for a sign, lest it should tempt the Lord. Influenced by it, we have well nigh forgotten the sacred truth, graciously disclosed for our support, that Christ is the Son of God in His Divine nature as well as his human; we have well nigh ceased to regard Him, after the pattern of the Nicene Creed, as "God from God, and Light from Light," ever one with Him yet ever separate from Him. We speak of Him in a vague way as God, which is true, but not the whole truth; and, in consequence, when we proceed to consider His humiliation, we are unable to carry on the notion of His personality from heaven to earth. He who was but now spoken of as God without mention of the Father from whom He is, is next described as a creature; but how do these distinct notions of Him hold together in our minds? We are able to continue the idea of a Son into that of a servant, though the descent was infinite, and, to our reason, incomprehensible; but when we merely speak first of God, then of man, we seem to change the Nature without preserving the Person. In truth, His Divine Sonship is that portion of the sacred doctrine on which the mind is providentially intended to rest throughout, and so to preserve for itself His identity unbroken. But when we abandon this gracious help afforded to our faith, how can we hope to gain one true and simple vision of Him? how shall we possibly look beyond our own words, or apprehend, in any sort, what we say? In consequence we are too often led, as a matter of necessity, in discoursing of His words and works, to distinguish between the Christ who lived on earth and the Son of God Most High, speaking of His human nature and His Divine nature so separately as not to feel or understand that God is man and man is God. I am speaking of those of us who have learned to reflect, reason, and dispute, to inquire and pursue their thoughts, not of the incurious or illiterate, who are not exposed to the temptation in question; and of the former I fear I must say, (to use the language of ancient theology.)

that they begin by being Sabellians, that they go on to be Nestorians, and that they tend to be Ebionites and to deny Christ's divinity altogether. Meanwhile the religious world little thinks whither its opinions are leading; and will not discover that it is adoring a mere abstract name or a vague creation of the mind for the Ever-living Son, till the defection of its members from the faith startle it, and teach it that the so-called religion of the heart, without orthodoxy of doctrine, is but the warmth of a corpse, real for a time, but sure to fail.

How long will that complicated Error last under which our Church now labours? How long are human traditions of modern date to obscure, in so many ways, the majestic interpretations of Holy Writ which the Church Catholic has inherited from the age of the Apostles? When shall we be content to enjoy the wisdom and the pureness which Christ has bequeathed to His Church as a perpetual gift, instead of attempting to draw our creed, each for himself, as he best may, from the deep wells of truth? Surely in vain have we escaped from the errors of Rome, if the worse, because the more subtle, corruptions of a rash and self-trusting philosophy spread over our faith!

May God, even the Father, give us a heart and understanding to realize, as well as to confess that doctrine into which we were baptized, that His Only-begotten Son our Lord was conceived by the Holy Ghost, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, and was buried, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, from whence He shall come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead!

SERMON XIII.

JEWISH ZEAL, A PATTERN TO CHRISTIANS.

JUDGES v. 31.

So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

WHAT a contrast do these words present to the history which goes before them! "It came to pass," says the sacred writer, "when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer . . . Neither did Zebulon drive out the inhabitants of Kitron . . . Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho . . . Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh."* What was the consequence? "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim . . . they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about . . . Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; and they were greatly distressed."† Here is the picture of indolence and unfaithfulness leading to cowardice, to apostasy, and to national ruin.

On the other hand, consider, by way of contrast, the narrative contained in the chapter which ends with the text. Ephraim and Benjamin, Machir and Zebulon, Issachar and Naphtali, rousing, uniting, assailing their enemies, and conquering; conquering in the strength of the Lord. Their long captivity was as nothing, through God's great mercy, when they turned to Him. In vain had their enemies trod them down to the ground; the Church of God had that power and grace

* Judges i. 28—32.

† Judges ii. 11—15.

within it, that, whenever it could be persuaded to shake off its lassitude and rally, it smote as sharply and as effectively as though it had never been bound with the green withes and the new ropes of the Philistines. So it was now. "Awake, awake, Deborah : awake, awake, utter a song : arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Such was the inspired cry of war : and it was obeyed. In consequence the Canaanites were discomfited in battle and fled ; "and the land had rest forty years." Here is a picture of manly obedience to God's will,—a short trial of trouble and suffering,—and then the reward, *peace*.

I propose now to make some remarks upon the lesson conveyed to us in this history, which extends indeed through the greater part of the Old Testament,—the lesson to us *as individuals* ; for surely it is with reference to our own duties *as individuals*, that we should read every part of Scripture.

What the Old Testament especially teaches us is this :—that zeal is as essentially a duty of all God's rational creatures, as prayer and praise, faith and submission ; and, surely, if so, especially of sinners whom He has redeemed ; that zeal consists in a strict attention to His commands—a scrupulousness, vigilance, heartiness, and punctuality which bears with no reasoning or questioning about them,—an intense thirst for the advancement of His glory,—a shrinking from the pollution of sin and sinners,—an indignation, nay impatience, at witnessing His honour insulted,—a quickness of feeling when His name is mentioned, and a jealousy how it is mentioned,—a fulness of purpose, an heroic determination to yield Him service at whatever sacrifice of personal feeling,—an energetic resolve to push through all difficulties, were they as mountains, when His eye or hand but gives the sign,—a carelessness of obloquy, or reproach, or persecution, a forgetfulness of friend and relative, nay a hatred (so to say) of all that is naturally dear to us, when He says "Follow Me." These are some of the characteristics of zeal. Such was the temper of Moses, Phinehas, Samuel, David, Elijah ; it is the temper enjoined on all the Israelites, especially in their conduct towards the abandoned nations of Canaan. The text expresses that temper in the words of Deborah : "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord ; but let them that love Him, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Now, it has sometimes been said that the commands of strenuous and stern service given to the Israelites,—for instance, relative to their taking and keeping possession of the promised land,—do not apply to us Christians. There can be no doubt it is not our duty to take the sword and kill the enemies of God, as the Jews were told to do ; "Put

up again thy sword into his place,"* are our Saviour's words to St. Peter. So far, then, if this is what is meant by saying that these commands do not apply to us, so far, doubtless, it is clear they do not apply to us. But it does not, hence, follow that the temper of mind which they pre-suppose and foster is not required of us; else, surely, the Jewish history is no longer profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. St. Peter was blamed, not for his zeal, but for his use of the sword.

Man's duty, perfection, happiness, have always been one and the same. He is not a different being now from what he ever was; he has always been commanded the same duties. What was the holiness of an Israelite is still the holiness of a Christian, though the Christian has far higher privileges and aids for perfection. The Saints of God have ever lived by faith, and walked in the way of justice, mercy, truth, self-mastery, and love. It is impossible, then, that all these duties imposed on the Israelites of driving out their enemies, and taking and keeping possession of the promised land, should not in some sense or other apply to us; for it is clear, they were not in their case mere accidents of obedience, but went to form a certain inward character, and as clear is it that our hearts must be as the heart of Moses or David, if we would be saved through Christ.

This is quite evident, if we attentively examine the Jewish history and the divine commands which are the principles of it. For these commands, which some persons have said do not apply to us, are so many and varied, and repeated at so many and diverse times, that they certainly must have formed a peculiar character in the heart of the obedient Israelite, and were much more than an outward form and a sort of ceremonial service. They are so abundant throughout the Old Testament, that, unless they in some way apply to us, it is difficult to see what is its direct use, at this day, in the way of precept; and this is the very conclusion which these same persons often go on to draw. They are willing to rid themselves of the Old Testament, and they say that Christians are not concerned in it, and that the Jews were almost barbarians; whereas St. Paul tells us, that the Jewish history is "written for our admonition and our learning."†

Let us consider some of the commands I have referred to, and the terms in which they are conveyed. For instance, that for the extirpation of the devoted nations from the land of Canaan. "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, . . . thou shalt smite" the nations that possess it, "and utterly

* Matt. xxvi. 52.

† 1 Cor. x. 11. Rom. xv. 4.

destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them; neither shalt thou make marriages with them Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn down their graven images with fire. . . . Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them.”*

Next observe, this merciless temper, as profane people would call it, but as well-instructed Christians say, this Godly zeal, was enjoined upon them under far more distressing circumstances, viz. the transgressions of their own relations and friends. “If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods. . . . Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal them. But thou shalt surely kill him. Thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.”† Now, doubtless, we at this day are not to put men to death for idolatry; but, doubtless also, whatever temper of mind the fulfilment of this command implied in the Jew, such, essentially, must be our temper of mind, whatever else it may be also; for God cannot speak two laws, He cannot love two characters,—good is good, and evil is evil, and the law He gave to the Jews was, in its substance, “perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord pure, enlightening the eyes; . . . more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover,” as the Psalmist proceeds, “by them is Thy servant taught, and in keeping of them there is great reward.”‡

A self-mastering fearless obedience was another part of this same religious temper enjoined on the Jews, and still incumbent, as I dare affirm, on us Christians. “Be ye very *courageous* to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses.”§ It required an exceeding moral courage in the Jews to enable them to go straight forward, seduced neither by their feelings nor their reason.

Nor was the severe temper under review a duty in the early ages of Judaism only. The book of Psalms was written at different times, between David’s age and the captivity, yet it plainly breathes the same hatred of sin, and opposition to sinners. I will but cite one text from the hundredth and thirty-ninth Psalm. “Do not I hate them, O Lord,

* Deut. vii. 1—5. 16.

† Ps. xix. 7, 8, 10, 11.

† Deut. xiii. 6—9.

§ Josh. xxiii. 6.

that hate Thee ? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee ? I hate them with perfect hatred ; I count them mine enemies." And then the inspired writer proceeds to lay open his soul before God, as if conscious he had but expressed feelings which He would approve. "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Further still, after the return from the captivity, after the Prophets had enlarged the compass of Divine Revelation, and purified and heightened the religious knowledge of the nation, still this rigid and austere zeal was enjoined and enforced in all its ancient vigour by Ezra. The Jews set about a reformation ; and what was its most remarkable act ? Let us attend to the words of Ezra : "The princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands ; for they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons ; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands ; yea, the hand of the princess and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." Now let me stop to ask what would most likely be the conduct of a temporizing Christian of this day, had he, in that day, been in Ezra's place ? He would, doubtless, have said that such marriages were quite unjustifiable certainly, but now that they were made, there was no remedy for it ; that they must be hindered in future ; but, in the existing instances, the evil being done could not be undone ;—and, besides, the great men were involved in the sin, whom it was impossible to interfere with. This he would have said, I think, though the prohibition of Moses seemed to make such marriages null and void from the first. Now, I do not say that every one ought to have done what Ezra did, for he was supernaturally directed ; but would the course he adopted have ever entered into the mind of men of this day, or can they even understand or acquiesce in it, now that they know it ? for what did he ? "And when I heard this thing," he says, "I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head, and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice."* Then he offered a confession and intercession in behalf of the people ; then at length he and the people came to a decision ; which was no other than this,—to command all persons, who had married foreign wives, to *put them away*. He undid the evil, as well as hindered it in

* Ezra ix. 3, 4.

future. What an act of self-denying zeal was this in a multitude of people !

These are some, out of many instances which might be brought from the Jewish history, in proof of the duty of strict and severe loyalty to God and His revealed will ; and I here adduce them, first, to show that the commands involving it could not, (their number and variety are so great,) could not have related to a merely outward and ceremonial obedience, but must have wrought in the Jews a certain temper of mind, pleasing to God, and therefore necessary for us also to possess. Next, I deduce from that same circumstance of their number and variety, that they must be binding on us, else the Old Testament would be but a shadow of a revelation or law to the Christian.

I wish to insist on the lesson supplied merely by the Old Testament, and will not introduce into the argument the consideration of the Apostle's doctrine, which is quite in accordance with it. Yet it may be right, briefly, to refer to the sinless pattern of our Lord, and to what is told us of the holy inhabitants of heaven, in order to show that the temper of mind enjoined on the Jews belongs to those who are in a state of being superior to us, as well as to those who were living under a defective and temporary Dispensation. There was an occasion when our Lord is expressly said to have taken upon Him the zeal which consumed David. "Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the Temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting ; and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changer's money, and overthrew the tables." Surely, unless we had this account given us by an inspired writer, we should not have believed it ! Influenced by notions of our own devising, we should have said, this zealous action of our Lord was quite inconsistent with His merciful, meek, and (what may be called) His majestic and serene temper of mind. To put aside form, to dispense with the ministry of His attendant Angels, to act before He had spoken His displeasure, to use His own hand, to hurry to and fro, to be a servant in the work of purification, surely this must have arisen from a fire of indignation at witnessing His Father's House insulted, which we sinners cannot understand. But any how, it is but the perfection of that temper which, as we have seen, was encouraged and exemplified in the Jewish Church. That energy, decision, and severity which Moses enjoined on his people, is manifested in Christ Himself, and is, therefore, undeniably a duty of man as such, whatever be his place or attainments in the scale of human nature.

Such is the pattern afforded us by our Lord ; to which add the ex-

ample of the Angels which surround Him. Surely in Him is mingled, "goodness and severity;" such therefore, are all holy creatures, loving and severe. We read of their thoughts and desires in the Apocalypse, "Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." Again, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shall be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." And again, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." Once more, "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works;"*—all which passages imply a deep and solemn acquiescence in God's judgments.

Thus a certain fire of zeal, showing itself, not by force and blood, but as really and certainly as if it did,—cutting through natural feelings, neglecting self, preferring God's glory to all things, firmly resisting sin, protesting against sinners, and steadily contemplating their punishment, is a duty belonging to all creatures of God, a duty of Christians, in the midst of all that excellent overflowing charity which is the highest Gospel grace, and the fulfilling of the second table of the Law.

And such, in fact, has ever been the temper of the Christian Church; in evidence of which I need but appeal to the impressive fact, that the Jewish Psalter has been the standard book of Christian devotion from the first down to this day. I wish we thought more of this circumstance. Can any one doubt that, supposing that blessed manual of faith and love had never been in use among us, great numbers of the present generation would have clamoured against it as unsuitable to express *Christian* feelings,—as deficient in charity and kindness? Nay, do we not know, though I dare say it may surprise many a sober Christian to hear that it is so, that there are men at this moment who (I hardly like to mention it) wish parts of the Psalms left out of the Service as ungentle and harsh? Alas! that men of this day should rashly put their own judgment in competition with that of all the Saints of every age hitherto since Christ came,—should virtually say, "either *they* have been wrong or *we* are," thus forcing us to decide between the two. Alas! that they should dare to criticise the words of inspiration. Alas! that they should follow the steps of the backsliding Israelites, and shrink from siding with the Truth in its struggle with

* Rev. xiv. 7. xvi. 5—7. xviii. 5, 6.

the world, instead of saying with Deborah, "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord!"

Now I shall make a few observations in conclusion, with a view of showing how meekness and charity are compatible with this austere and valiant temper of the Christian soldier.

1. Of course it is absolutely sinful to have any private enmities. Not the bitterest personal assaults upon us should induce us to retaliate. We must do good for evil, "love those who hate, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who spitefully use us." It is only when it is impossible at once to be kind to them and give glory to God, that we may cease to act kindly towards them. When David speaks of hating God's enemies, it was under circumstances when keeping friends with them would have been a desertion of the Truth. St. James says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"* and so, on the other hand, devotion to God's cause is enmity with the world. But no personal feeling must intrude itself in any case. We hate sinners, by putting them out of our sight as if they were not, by annihilating them in our affections. And this we must do even in the case of our friends and relations, if God requires it. But in no case are we to allow ourselves in resentment or malice.

2. Next, it is quite compatible with the most earnest zeal, to offer kind offices to God's enemies when in distress. I do not say that a denial of these offices may not be a duty ordinarily; for it is our duty, as St. John tells us in his second Epistle, not even to receive them into our houses. But the case is very different where men are brought into extremity. God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."† We must go and do likewise, imitating the good Samaritan; and as he thought nothing of difference of nations when a Jew was in distress, in like manner we must not take account of wilful heresy, or profaneness, in such circumstances.

3. And further, the Christian keeps aloof from sinners in order to do them good. He does so in the truest and most enlarged charity. It is a narrow and weak feeling to please a man here, and to endanger his soul. A true friend is he who speaks out, and, when a man sins, shows him that he is displeased at the sin. He who sets up no witness against his friend's sin, is "partaker of his evil deeds."‡ The Psalmist speaks in this spirit, when after praying to God "to persecute" the ungodly "with His tempest," he adds, "fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy name, O Lord."§

* James iv. 4.

† Matt. v. 45.

‡ 2 John 11.

§ Ps. lxxiii. 16.

Accordingly, the more zealous a Christian is, therefore is he the more charitable. The Israelite, when he entered Canaan, was told to spare neither old nor young; the weak and the infirm were to be no exception in the list of victims whose blood was to be shed. "Of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."* Accordingly, when the people fought against Sihon, they "took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones of every city," they left none to remain.† And when Jericho was taken, they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.‡ What an awful office was this, what an unutterably heart-piercing task, almost enough to make a man frantic, except as upheld by the power of Him who gave the command! Yet Moses, thus severely minded to do God's will, was the meekest of men. Samuel too, who sent Saul to slay in Amalek "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass," was from his youth up the wise and heavenly-minded guide and prophet of Israel. David, who had a fiery zeal so as even to consume him, was (as we see by his Psalms) most tender-hearted and gentle in his feelings and thoughts. Doubtless while the servants of God executed His judgments, they still could bend in pity and in hope over the young and old whom they slew with the sword,—merciful amid their severity;—an unspeakable trial, doubtless, of faith and self-mastery, and requiring a very exalted and refined spirit successfully to undergo. Doubtless, as they slew those who suffered for the sins of their fathers, their thoughts turned, first to the fall of Adam, next to that unseen state where all inequalities are righted, and they surrendered themselves as instruments unto the Lord, of mysteriously working out good through evil.—And shall *we* faint at our far lesser trials when they bore the greater? Spared the heavy necessity of piercing with the spear of Phinehas, and of hewing Agag in Gilgal,—allowed to take instead of inflicting suffering, and to "make a difference" instead of an indiscriminate severity,—shall we, like cowards, shrink from bearing our lighter burdens, which our Lord commands, and in which He set us the pattern? Shall we be perversely persuaded by the appearance of amiableness or kindness in those whom God's word bids us depart from as heretics, or profligate livers, or troublers of the Church? Joseph could speak strangely to his brethren and treat them as spies, put one of them in prison and demand another from Canaan, while he hardly refrained himself in doing so, and his bowels yearned over them; and

* Deut. xx. 16.

† Deut. ii. 34.

‡ Josh. vi. 21.

by turns he punished them and wept for them. O that there was in us this high temper of mingled austerity and love ! Barely do we conceive of severity by itself, and of kindness by itself ; but who unites them ? We think we cannot be kind enough without ceasing to be severe. Who is there that walks through the world wounding according to the rule of zeal, and scattering balm freely in the fulness of love ; smiting as a duty, and healing as a privilege ; loving most when he seems sternest, and embracing them most tenderly whom in semblance he treats roughly ? What a state we are in, when any one who rehearses the plain threats of our Lord and His Apostles against sinners, or ventures to defend the anathemas of His Church, is thought unfeeling rather than merciful ; when they who separate from the irreligious world are blamed as fanciful and extravagant, and those who confess the truth, as it is in Jesus, are said to be bitter, hot of head, and intemperate ! Yet, with God's grace, with the history of the Old Testament before us, and the fearful recompense to warn us which came upon backsliding Israel, we, the Ministers of Christ, dare not keep silence amid this great error. In behalf of Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who yielded up His precious life for us, and now feeds us with His own blood for the sake of the souls whom He has redeemed, and whom, by a false and cruel charity, the world would keep in ignorance and sin,—we cannot refrain ; and if His Holy Spirit be with us, as we trust He is, whatever betides, whatever is coming on this country, speak the truth we will, and overcome in our speaking we must ; for He has given us to overcome !

SERMON XIV.

SUBMISSION TO CHURCH AUTHORITY.

PROV. iv. 24—27.

Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips, put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left : remove thy foot from evil.

PRECEPTS such as these come home with the force of truth, even to minds which fain would resist them, from their seriousness and practical wisdom, putting aside the authority of inspiration. At no time and under no circumstances are they without their application ; at the present time, when religious unity and peace are so lamentably disregarded, and novel doctrines and new measures alone are popular, they naturally remind us of the duty of obedience to the Church, and of the sin of departing from it, or what our Litany prays against under the name of “heresy and schism.” It may seem out of place to speak of this sin here, because those who commit it are not likely to be in Church to profit by what might be said about it ; yet the commission of it affects even those who do not commit it, by making them indifferent to it. For this reason, and because it is right that even such persons as are firmest in their adherence to the Church should know why they adhere to it, I will consider some of the popular objections which are made to such adherence, by those who account it, not sinful indeed, (though many go even this length,) but unnecessary.

You know time was when there was but one vast body of Christians, called the Church, throughout the world. It was found in every country where the name of Christ was named ; it was every where governed in the same way by Bishops ; it was every where descended from the Apostles through the line of those Bishops ; and it was every where in perfect peace and unity together, branch with branch, all over the world. Thus it fulfilled the prophecy : “Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together ; for there are set Thrones of judgment, the Thrones of

the House of David."* There were, indeed, separatists and dissenters then as now, but they were many and various, not one body like the Church; they were short-lived, had a beginning after the Apostles, and came to an end, first one and then another. But now all this beauty of Jerusalem is miserably defaced. That vast Catholic body, "the Holy Church throughout all the world," is broken into many fragments by the power of the Devil; just as some huge barrier cliff which once boldly fronted the sea is at length cleft, parted, overthrown by the waves. Some portions of it are altogether gone, and those that remain are separated from each other. We are the English Catholics; abroad are the Roman Catholics, some of whom are also among ourselves; elsewhere are the Greek Catholics, and so on. And thus we stand in this day of rebuke and blasphemy,—clinging to our own portion of the Ancient Rock which the waters are roaring round and would fain overflow,—trusting in God,—looking for the dawn of day, which "will at length come and will not tarry," when God will save us from the rising floods, if we have courageously kept our footing where He has placed us, neither yielding to the violence of the waves which sweep over us, nor listening to the crafty invitations of those who offer us an escape in vessels not of God's building.

Now I am going to notice and refute some of the bad arguments by which the children of this world convey their invitation.

1. First they say, "Why keep so strictly to one body of Christians when there are so many other bodies also,—so many denominations, so many persuasions,—all soldiers of Christ, like so many different armies, all advancing in one cause against one enemy? Surely this exclusive attachment to one party," so they speak "to the neglect of other Christians who profess a like doctrine, and only differ in forms, is the sign of a narrow and illiberal mind. Christianity is a universal gift; why then limit its possession to one set of men and one kind of Church government, instead of allowing all who choose to take it to themselves in any way they please?"

Now surely, those who thus speak should begin with answering Scripture, not questioning us; for Scripture certainly recognizes but "one body" of Christians as explicitly as "one Spirit, one faith, one Lord, and one God and Father of all."† As far as the text of Scripture goes, it is as direct a contradiction of it to speak of more than one body, as to speak of more than one Spirit. On the other hand, Scripture altogether contemplates the *existence* of persuasions, as they are called, round about this one body, for it speaks of them; but it does not hint ever so faintly

* Ps. cxxii. 3. 5.

† Eph. iv. 4—6.

that, because they exist, therefore they must be acknowledged. So much the contrary, that it says, "There must be heresies," that is, private persuasions, self-formed bodies, "among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Again, "A man that is a heretic," that is, one who adopts some opinion of his own in religious matters, and gets about him followers, "after the first and second admonition, reject." And again "Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them."† Now, we are of those who, in accordance with these directions, have ever kept clear of such human doctrines and private opinions, adhering to that one Body Catholic which alone was founded by the Apostles, and will last till the end of all things. And it is surely better thus implicitly to believe and obey God's voice in Scripture, than to reason; it is more tolerable to be called narrow-minded by man, than to be pronounced self-wise and self-sufficient by God; it is happier to be thought over-scrupulous, with the Bible, than to have the world's praise for liberality without it.

But again, who is bold enough to say that "it would be a narrow and niggardly appointment, were the blessings of the Gospel stored up in one body or set of persons to the exclusion of others?" Let him see to it, how he opposes God's universal scheme of providence which we see before our eyes. Christianity is a blessing for the whole earth,—granted; but it does not therefore follow (to judge from what we otherwise know of God's dealings with us) that none have been specially commissioned to dispense the blessing. Mercies given to multitudes are not less mercies because they flow from particular sources. Indeed, most of the great appointments of Divine goodness are marked by this very character of what men call *exclusiveness*. God distributes numberless benefits to all men, but He does so through a few select instruments. The few are favoured for the good of the many. Wealth, power, gifts of mind, learning, all tend towards the welfare of the community; yet, for all that, they are not given at once to all, but channelled out to the many through the few. And so the blessings of the Gospel are open to the whole world, as freely given as light or fire: yet even light has had its own receptacle since the fourth day of Creation, and fire has been hidden in the flinty rock,—as if to show us that the light and fire of our souls are not gained without the use of means, nor except from special sources.

Again, as to the Ministerial Succession being a form, and adherence to it a form, it can only be called a form because we do not see its effects; did any thing *visible* attend it, we should no longer call it a

† 1 Cor. xi. 19; Tit. iii. 10; Rom. xvi. 17.

form. Did a miracle always follow a baptism or a return into the Church, who would any longer call it a form? that is, we call it a form, only so long as we refuse to walk by *faith*, which dispenses with things visible. Faith sees things not to be forms, if commanded, which seem like forms; it realizes consequences. Men ignorant in the sciences would predict no result from chemical and the like experiments; they would count them a form and a pretence. What is prayer but a form? that is, who (to speak generally) sees any thing come of it? But we believe it, and so are blessed. In what sense is adherence to the Church a form in which prayer is not also? The benefit of the one is not seen, nor of the other; the one will not profit the ungodly and careless, nor will the other; the one is commanded in Scripture, so is the other. Therefore, to say that Church-union is a form, is no disparagement of it; forms are the very food of faith.

2. However, it may be argued, that, "whatever was the cause, and whatever was intended by Divine Providence, many sects there are;" and that, "if unity be a duty, as members of the Church maintain, the best, the only way to effect it now, is for them to relax their strictness and join in one with all sects upon whatever terms." I answer by asking, whether we have any *leave* so to do, any commission to alter any part of what God has appointed; whether we might not as well pretend to substitute another ordinance for Baptism as to annul the rites of the Church Catholic, and put human societies and teachers of man's creating on a level with it? Balaam even felt what was the power of a Divine appointment. "He hath blessed," he says, "*and I cannot reverse it.*" Even holy Isaac, much as he wished it, could not change the course of the blessing once conferred, or the decree of God. He cried out of Jacob, "yea, and he shall be blessed;" for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth," "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," "but of God that sheweth mercy." "The gifts and calling of God, are without repentance."*

Men, who have themselves separated from the Church, sometimes urge a union among all Christians in the following way: they say, "We dissent from you; yet we will cast aside our forms if you will cast aside yours. Thus there will be mutual concession. What are forms, so that our hearts are one?" Nay, but there is not, there cannot be, a like heart and spirit, from the very nature of the case, between us and them, for obedience to the Church is one part of our spirit. Those who think much of submission to her authority as we do, plainly do differ in spirit from those who think little of it. Such persons, then, however well they mean it, yet, in fact, ask us to give up something,

* Numb. xxiii. 20; Gen. xxvii. 33; Rom. ix. 16; John i. 13; Rom. xi. 29.

while they give up nothing themselves ; for that is not much to give up which a man sets no value upon. All they give up is what they themselves disparage by calling a form. They call *our* holy discipline also a form, but we do not ; and it is not a mere form in our judgments, though it may be in theirs. They call it a human invention, just as they call their own ; but, till we call it so also, till they have first convinced us that it is, it must be a sacrifice in us to give it up, such as they cannot possibly make. They cannot make such sacrifice, because they have made it already, or their fathers before them, when they left the Church. They cannot make it, for they have no affections to sacrifice in the matter ; whereas our piety, our reverence, our faith, our love adhere to the Church of the Apostles, and could not (were desertion possible, which God forbid!) could not be torn away from it without many wounds and much anguish. Surely, then, it is craft, or oversimplicity, in those who differ from us, thus to speak. They strip themselves of what we consider an essential of holiness, the decencies and properties of the Ancient Rule. Then, being unclothed, they are forced to array themselves in new forms and ordinances, as they best may ; and these novelties, which their own hands have sewed together to cover them, which they never revered, and which are soon to wither, they purpose (as though) to sacrifice to us, provided we, on our part, will cast from us the Lord's own clothing, that sanctity and sobriety of order, which is the gift of Christ, the earnest of His imputed merits, the type and the effectual instrument of His work in our hearts. This, truly, would be exchanging the fine gold for brass ; or, like unthankful Esau, bartering our enduring birthright for an empty and transitory benefit.

3. But the argument is continued. "Well," it may be said, "even granting that obedience to the Church be a Scripture duty, still, when there are erroneous teachers in it, surely it is a higher duty to desert them for their error's sake, than to keep to them for form's sake." Now, before this question can be answered, the error must be specified which this or that teacher holds.

The plain and practical question we have to decide is, whether his error be such as to suspend his power of administering the Sacraments. It must be deadly indeed and monstrous to effect this ; and, surely, this ministry of the Sacraments, not of the outward word,—of the spirit, not of the letter,—is his principal power and our principal need. It is our interest, it is our soul's interest, that we keep to those who minister divine benefits, even though they "offend in many things." And it is plainly our duty also. If they be in error, let us pray for them, not abandon them. If they sin against us, let not us sin against them. Let us return good for evil. Thus David acted even towards Saul his per-

secutor. He "behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him."* The cruelty of Saul was an extreme case; yet David's eyes looked right on," and "he turned not to the right hand nor the left." He still honoured Saul, as put over him by Almighty God. So ought we, in St. Paul's words, to "obey them that have the rule over us, and submit ourselves."

In truth, the notion that errors in a particular teacher justify separation from the Church itself, is founded in a mistake as to the very object (as it may be considered) for which teaching was committed to it. If individual teachers were infallible, there would be no need of order and rule at all. If we had a living Head upon earth, such as once our Saviour was with His disciples, teaching and directing us in all things, the visible Church might *so far* be dispensed with. But, since we have not, a form of doctrine, a system of laws, a bond of subordination connecting all in one, is the next best mode of securing the stability of sacred Truth. The whole body of Christians thus become the *trustees* of it, to use the language of the world, and, in fact, have thus transmitted it down to ourselves. Thus, teachers have been bound to teach in one way not in another, as well as hearers to hear. As, then, we have a share in the advantage, let us not complain of sharing in the engagement; as we enjoy the Truth at this day by the strictness of those who were before us, let us not shrink from undergoing that through which we have inherited it. If hearers break the rule of discipline, why should not teachers break the rule of faith? and if we find fault with our teacher, even while he is restrained by the Church's rule, how much greater would be our complaint when he was not so restrained? Let us not then be impatient of an appointment which effects so much, on the ground that it does not effect all. Let us not forget that rules pre-suppose the risk of error, but rather reflect whether they do not do more than they fail to do. Let us be less selfish than to think of ourselves only. Let us look out upon the whole community, the poor, the ignorant, the wayward, and the mistaken. Let us consider whether it will be prudent to become responsible for the Church's ultimately withdrawing from our land, which we shall be (as far as in us lies) by our withdrawing from it.

4. But it may be said, "Faith is not a matter of words, but of the heart. It is more than the formal doctrine, it is the temper and spirit of this or that teacher which is wrong. His creed may be orthodox, but his religion is not vital; and surely external order must not lie upon us as a burden, stifling and destroying the true inward fellowship between Christian and Christian." Now let it be carefully noted that, if order

* 1 Sam. xviii. 14.

is to be preserved at all, it must be at the expense of what seems to be of more consequence, *viz.* the so-called communion of the heart between Christians. This peculiarity is involved in its very nature; and surely our Saviour knew this when he enjoined it. For consider a moment. True spiritual feeling, heartfelt devotion, lively faith, and the like, do not admit of being described, defined, ascertained in any one fixed way; as is implied indeed in the very objection under consideration. We form our judgment of them, whatever it be, by a number of little circumstances, of language, manner, and conduct, which cannot be put into words, which to no two beholders appears exactly the same, insomuch that if every one is to be satisfied, every one must have the power of drawing his line for himself. But if every one follow his own rule of fellowship, how can there possibly be but "one body," and in what sense are those words of the Apostle to be taken?

Again, this or that person may be more or less religious in speech and conduct; how are we to draw the line, even according to our own individual standard, and say who are to be in our Church and who out of it? Scandalous offenders indeed, and open heretics might be excluded at once; but it would be far easier to say whom to put out than whom to let in, unless we let in all. From the truest believer to the very infidel, there may be interposed a series of men, more or less religious, in human eyes, gradually filling up the whole interval. Even if we could infallibly decide between good and bad, life would be spent in the work;—what our success really will be, may be foretold from the instances of those who attempt to do so, and who not unfrequently mistake for highly-gifted Christians men who are almost unbelievers. But, granting we have some extraordinary gift of discernment, still any how we could not see more than He sees, who implies that the faith of all of us is but immature and in its rudiments, by His very postponement of the final judgment:—so that to draw a line at all, and yet to include just all who seem religious, are things of necessity incompatible with each other.

On the other hand, forms are precise and definite. Once broken, they are altogether broken. There are no degrees of breaking them; either they are observed or they are not. It seems then, on the whole, that if we leave the Church, in order to join what appears a less formal, a more spiritual, religion elsewhere, we break a commandment for certain, and we do not for certain secure to ourselves a benefit.

5. Lastly, it may be asked, "Are we then to keep aloof from those whom we think good men, granting that it would be better that they should be in the Church?" We need not, we must not, keep aloof. We are not bound, indeed, to court their society, but we are bound not to

shrink from them when we fall in with them, except, indeed, they be the actual authors and fomenters of division. We are bound to love them and pray for them ; not to be harsh with them, or revile or despise them, but to be gentle, patient, apt to teach, merciful to make allowance, to interpret their conduct for the best. We would, if we could, be one with them in heart and in form, thinking a loving unity the glory and crown of Christian faith ; and we will try all means to effect this ; but we feel, and we cannot conceal it, we feel that, if we and they are to be one, they must come over to us. We desire to meet together, but it must be in the Church, not on neutral ground, or rather an enemy's, the open inhospitable waste of this world, but within that sheltered heritage whose landmarks have long since been set up. If Christ has constituted one Holy Society (which He has done) ; if His Apostles have set it in order (which they did), and have expressly bidden us (as they have in Scripture) not to undo what they have begun ; and if (in matter of fact) their Work so set in order and so blessed is among us this very day (as it is), and we partakers of it, it were a traitor's act in us to abandon it, an unthankful slight on those who have preserved it for so many ages, a cruel disregard of those who are to come after us, nay of those now alive who are external to it and might otherwise be brought into it. We must transmit as we have received. We did not make the Church, we may not unmake it. As we believe it to be a Divine Ordinance, so we must ever protest against separation from it as a sin. There is not a dissenter living, but, inasmuch, and so far as he dissents, is in a sin. It may, in this or that instance, be a sin of infirmity, or carelessness, nay of ignorance ; it may be a sin of the society a man is in, not his own, a ceremonial offence, not a personal ; still it is in its nature sinful. It may be mixed up with much that is good ; it may be a perversion of conscience, or again, an inconsistency in him ; it may be connected more or less with piety towards his forefathers ; still, considered as such, it cannot but be a blemish and a disadvantage, and, if he is saved, he will be saved, not through it, but in spite of it. So far forth as he dissents, he is under a cloud ; and though we too may, for what we know, have as great sins to answer for, taking his sin at the greatest, and though we pray that Christ will vouchsafe, in some excellent way, known to Himself, to "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle," all "who love Him uncorruptly," even if separate from the glories of His Church on earth, still protest we should and must against separation itself, and wilful continuance in it, as evil,—as nothing short of "the gainsaying of Core," and the true child of that sin which lost us Eden.

Nor does the sin of separation end in itself. Never suppose, my brethren, whatever the world may say, that a man is neither better nor

worse, in his own faith and conduct, for separating from the Church. Of course we cannot "try the heart and the reins," or decide about individuals; still thus much seems clear, that, on the whole, deliberate insubordination is the symptom, nay often the cause and first beginning of an unhumbléd, wilful, self-dependent, contentious, jealous, spirit; and as far as any man allows himself in acts of it, so far has he upon him the tokens of pride or of coldness of heart, going before or following after. Coldness and pride,—these sins are not peculiar, alas! to those who leave us; that we know full well. We all have the seeds of them within us, and it is our shame and condemnation if we do not repress them. But between us, if we be cold or proud, and those who are active in dissent, there is this clear difference; that proud reliance on self, or that cold formality, which may also be found in the Church, these, though found in it, are not fruits of it, do not rise from connection with it, but are inconsistent with it. For to obey is to be meek, not proud; and to obey for Christ's sake is to be zealous, not cold; whereas wilful separation or turbulent conduct, forming religious meetings of our own, opposing our private judgment to those who have the rule over us, disaffection towards them, and the like feelings and courses, are the very effects and the sure forerunners of pride, or impatience, or restlessness or self-will, or lukewarmness; so that these sins in members of the Church are in spite of the Church, and in separatists are involved in their separating.

"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." What have we, private Christians, to do with the hopes and fears of earth, with schemes of change, the pursuit of novelties, or dreams of reforms? The world is passing like a shadow; the day of Christ is hastening on. It is our wisdom surely to use what has been provided for us, instead of lusting after what we have not, asking flesh to eat, and gazing wistfully upon Egypt or on the heathen around us. Faith has no leisure to act the busy politician, to bring the world's language into the sacred fold, or to use the world's jealousies in a divine polity; to demand rights, to flatter the many, or to court the powerful. What is faith's highest wish and best enjoyment? A dying saint shall answer. It is related of a meek and holy confessor of our own, shortly before his departure, that when after much pain he was asked by a friend, "What more special thing he would recommend for one's whole life?" he briefly replied, "*uniform obedience*;" by which he meant, as his biographer tells us, that the happiest state of life was one, in which he had

not to command or direct, but *to obey solely* ; not having to choose for ourselves, but having our path of duty, our mode of life, our fortunes marked out for us.* This lot, indeed, as is plain, cannot be the lot of all ; but it is the lot of the many. Thus God pours out His blessings largely, and puts trial on the few ; but men do not understand their own gain, and run into trials as being unfit for enjoyment. May He give us grace to cherish a wiser mind ; to make much of our privilege, if we have it, to serve and be at rest ; and if we have it not, to covet it, and to bear, dutifully, as but a misfortune to a sinner, that freedom from restraint which the world boasts in as a chief good !

S E R M O N X V.

CONTEST BETWEEN TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN THE CHURCH.

MATT. xiii. 47, 48.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind ; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

IN the Apostles' age, the chief contest between Truth and Falsehood lay in the war waged by the Church against the world, and the world against the Church :—the Church, the aggressor in the name of the Lord ; the world, stung with envy and malice, rage and pride, retaliating spiritual weapons with carnal, the Gospel with persecution, good with evil, in the cause of the Devil. But of the conflict *within* the Church, such as it is at this day, Christians knew comparatively little. True, the Prophetic Spirit told them that “even of their own selves should men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them ;” that “in the last days perilous times should come.”† Also they had the experience of their own and former times to show

* Fell's Life of Hammond.

† Acts xx. 30. 2 Tim. iii. 1.

them, as in type, that in the Church evil will always mingle with the good. Thus, at the flood, there were eight men in the Ark, and one of them was reprobate; out of twelve Apostles, one was a devil; out of seven Deacons, one (as it is said) fell away into heresy; out of twelve tribes, one is dropped at the final scaling. These intimations, however, whether by instance or prophecy, were not sufficient to realize to them, before the event, the serious and awful truth implied in the text, viz. that the warfare which Christ began between His little flock and the world should be in no long while transferred into the Church itself, and be carried on by members of that Church one with another.

This, I say, the early Christians did not see fulfilled, as our eyes see it; and, so hard is it to possess ourselves of a true conviction about it, that, even at this day, when it may be plainly seen, men will not see it. They will not so open and surrender their minds to Divine truth, as to admit that the Holy Church has unholy members, that blessings are given to the unworthy, that "the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net that gathers of every kind." They evade this mysterious appointment in various ways. Sometimes they deny that bad men are really in God's Church, which they think consists only of good men. They have invented an Invisible Church, distinct and complete at present, and peopled by saints only, as if Scripture said one word anywhere, of a spiritual body existing in this world separate from, and independent of, the Visible Church; and they consider the Visible Church to be nothing but a mere part of this world, an establishment, sect, or party. Or, again, while they admit it as a Divine ordinance, they lower its standard of faith and holiness, and its privileges; and, considering the communion of saints to be but a name, and all Christians to be about alike, they effectually destroy all notions, whether of a Church or of a conflict. Thus, in one way or other, they refuse to admit the idea contained in the text, that the dissimilitude, the enmity and the warfare which once existed between the world and the Church, is now transferred into the Church itself.

But, let us try, with God's blessing, to get a firm hold upon this truth, and see if we cannot draw some instruction from it. The text says, that "the Kingdom of Heaven," that is, the Christian Church, "is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." Elsewhere St. Paul says, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour."* Now passages such as these admit of a very various application. I shall consider them here with reference to the contest between Truth and Falsehood in the Church.

* 2 Tim. ii. 20.

Doubtless it would, in the eye of natural reason, be a privilege, were the enemies of Christ and our souls separated from us, and did the trial of our faith take place on some broad questions, about which there could be no mistake; but such is not the fact "in the wisdom of God." Faith and unbelief, humbleness and pride, love and selfishness have been from the Apostles' age united in one and the same body; nor can any means of man's device disengage the one from the other. All who are within the Church have the same privileges; they are all baptized, all admitted to the Holy Eucharist, all taught in the Truth, all profess the Truth. At all times, indeed, there have been those who have avowed corrupt doctrine or indulged themselves in open vice; and whom, in consequence, it was easy to detect and avoid. But these are few; the great body in the Christian Church profess one and the same faith, and seem one and all to agree together. Yet, among these persons, thus apparently unanimous, is the real inveterate conflict proceeding, as from the beginning, between good and evil. Some of these are wise, some foolish. Who belong to the one, and the other party is hid from us, and will be hid till the day of judgment; nor are they at present individually formed upon the perfect model of good or evil; they vary one with another in the degree and mode of their holding to the one or the other; but that there are two parties in the Church, two parties, however vague and indefinite their outlines, among those who live, in one sense, as familiar friends, I mean, who eat the same spiritual Food, and profess the same Creed, is certain.

Next, what do they contend about? how and where their conflict? The Apostles contended about the truth of the Gospel with unbelievers; their immediate successors contended, though within the Church, yet against open heresies, such as they could meet, confute, and cast out; but in after times,—in our own day,—now,—what do the two secret parties in the Church, the elect and the false-hearted, what do they contend about?

It is difficult to answer this question suitably with the reverence due to this sacred place, in which the language of the world should not be heard. Yet, in so important a matter, one would wish to say something. That contest, which was first about the truth of the Gospel itself, next about the truth of doctrine, is now commonly about very small matters, of an every-day character, of public affairs, or domestic business, or parochial concerns, which serve as tests of our religious state, quite as truly as greater things, in God's unerring judgment,—serve as powerfully to form and train us for heaven or hell.

I say, that as the early Christians were bound to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," so the trial of our obedience

commonly lies in taking this or that side in a multitude of questions, in which there happen to be two sides, and which come before us almost continually; and, before attempting to explain what I mean, I would have you observe how parallel this state of things is to God's mode of trying and disciplining us in other respects.

For instance, how is our devotion to Christ shown? Ordinarily, not in great matters, not in giving up house and lands for His sake, but in making little sacrifices which the world would ridicule, if it knew of them; in abridging ourselves of comforts for the sake of the poor, in sacrificing our private likings to religious objects, in going to Church at a personal inconvenience, in taking pleasure in the society of religious men, though not rich, or noble, or accomplished, or gifted, or entertaining; in matters, all of them of very little moment in themselves.

How is self-denial shown? Not in literally bearing Christ's Cross, and living on locusts and wild honey, but in such light abstinences as come in our way, in some poor efforts at fasting and the like, in desiring to be poor rather than rich, solitary or lowly rather than well-connected, in living within our income, in avoiding display, in being suspicious of comforts and luxuries; all of which are too trifling for the person observing them to think about, yet have their use in proving and improving his heart.

How is Christian valour shown? Not in resisting unto blood, but in withstanding mistaken kindness, in enduring importunity, in submitting to surprise and hurt those we love, in undergoing little losses, inconveniences, censures, slights, rather than betray what we believe to be God's Truth, be it ever so small a portion of it.

As then, Christian devotion, self-denial, courage, are tried in this day in little things, so is Christian faith also. In the Apostles' age faith was shown in the great matter of joining either the Church, or the pagan or Jewish multitude. It is shown in this day by taking this side or that side in the many questions of opinion and conduct which come before us, whether domestic, or parochial, or political, or of whatever kind.

Take the most unlettered peasant in the humblest village; his trial lies in acting for the Church or against it in his own place. He may happen to be at work with others, or taking refreshment with others; and he may hear religion spoken against, or the Church, or the king; he may hear voices raised together in scoffing or violence; he must withstand laugh and jest, evil words and rudeness, and witness for Christ. Thus he carries on, in his day, the eternal conflict between Truth and Falsehood.

Another, in a higher class of society, has a certain influence in parish matters, in the application of charities, the appointment of officers, and

the like; he, too, must act, as in God's sight, for the Truth's sake, as Christ would have him.

Another has a certain political power; he has a vote to bestow, or dependents to advise; he has a voice to raise, and substance to contribute. Let him act for religion, not as if there were not a God in the world.

My brethren, I must not venture to keep silence in respect to a province of Christian duty, in which men are especially tried at this day, and in which they especially fail.

It is sometimes said that religion is not (what is called) political. Now there is a bad sense of the word "political," and religion is nothing that is bad. But there is also a good sense of the word, and in this sense whoever says that religion is not political speaks as erringly, and (whether ignorantly or not) offends with his tongue as certainly, as if in St. Paul's time a man had said it mattered not whether he was Christian or heathen; for what the question of Christian or no Christian was in the Apostle's day, such are questions of politics now. It is as right to take one side, and as wrong to take the other, now, in that multitude of matters which comes before us of a social nature, as it was right to become a Christian in St. Paul's day, and wrong to remain a heathen.

I am not saying *which* side is right and which is wrong, in the ever-varying course of social duty, much less am I saying all religious people are on one side and all irreligious on the other; (for then would that division between good and evil take place, which the text and other parables assure us is not to be till the day of judgment;) I only say there *is* a right and a wrong, that it is not a matter of indifference which side a man takes, that a man will be judged hereafter for the side he takes.

When a man (for instance) says that he takes part against the King or against the Church, because he thinks kingly power or established Churches contrary to Scripture, I think him as far from the truth as light is from darkness; but I understand him. He takes a religious ground, and, whatever I may think of his doctrine, I praise him for that. I had rather he should take a religious ground (if in sincerity) and be against the Church, than a worldly selfish ground, and be for it; that is, if done in earnest, not in pretence, I think it speaks more hopefully for his soul. I had rather the Church were levelled to the ground by a nation, really honestly, and seriously, thinking they did God service in doing so, fearful indeed as the sin would be,) than that it should be upheld by a nation on the *mere* ground of maintaining property, for I think this a much greater sin. I think that the worshipper of Mammon will be in worse case before Christ's judgment-seat than the mis-

taken zealot. If a man must be one or the other (though he ought to be neither,) but if I must choose for him, I had rather he should be Saul raging like a wild beast against the Church, than Gallio caring for none of these things, or Demas loving the present world, or Simon trafficking with sacred gifts, or Ananias grudging Christ his substance, and seeking to be saved as cheaply as possible. There would be more chance of such a man's conversion to the Truth; and, if not converted, less punishment reserved for him at the last day. Our Lord says to the church of Laodicea, "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will cast thee from My mouth."*

Men, however, generally act from mixed motives; so I do not mean that they are at once in a fearful peril, or as bad as fanatical revolutionists, for having some regard to the security of property, while they defend what is called the Church Established;—far from it, though I still think it would be better if the thought of religion absorbed all other considerations;—but I am speaking against an avowed doctrine maintained in this day, that religion has nothing to do with political matters; which will not be true till it is true that God does not govern the world; for as God rules in human affairs, so must his servants obey in them. And what we have to fear more than any thing else at this time is, that persons who are sound on this point, and do believe that the concerns of the nation ought to be carried on on religious principles, should be afraid to avow it, and should ally themselves, *without protesting*, with those who deny it; lest they should keep their own opinion to themselves, and act with the kindred of Gallio, Demas, Simon, and Ananias, on some mere secular basis, the mere defence of property, the security of our institutions, considered merely as secular, the maintenance of our national greatness; forgetting that, as no man can serve two masters, God and mammon, so no man can at once be in the counsels of the servants of the two;—forgetting that the Church, in which they and others are, is a net gathering of *every* kind; that it is no proof that others are to be followed and supported in all things, because they happen to be in it and profess attachment to it; and that though we are bound to associate in a general way with all, (except, indeed, such as openly break the rules of the Church, heretics, drunkards, evil livers, and the like, who ought of course to be put out of it,) yet we are not bound to countenance all in all they do, and are ever bound to oppose bad principles,—bound to attempt to raise the standard of faith and obedience in that multitude of men whom, though

* Rev. iii. 15, 16.

we disapprove in many respects, we dare not affirm to be entirely destitute of the life of the Holy Ghost, and not to suffer friend or stranger to take part against the Truth without warning him of it according to our opportunities.

Lastly, this union of the True and the False in the Church, which I have been speaking of, has ever existed in the governing part of it as well as among the people at large. Our Saviour sets this truth before us in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, in which He bids His hearers obey their spiritual rulers in all lawful things, even though they be unworthy of their office, because they hold it,—“as unto the Lord and not to men.” “The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not.” And no one can read, ever so little, the history of the Church since He was on earth, without perceiving that, under all the forms of obedience and subordination of kind offices and social intercourse, which Christ enjoins, a secret contest has been carried on, in the most sacred chambers of the Temple, between Truth and Falsehood;—rightly, peaceably, lovingly by some, uncharitably by others, with a strange mixture at times of right principles and defective temper, or of sincerity and partial ignorance; still, on the whole, a contest such as St. John's against Diotrephes, or St. Paul's against Ananias the High Priest, or Timothy's against Hymeneus and Alexander. Meantime the rules of ecclesiastical discipline have been observed on both sides as well as the professions of faith, as conditions of the contest; nevertheless, the contest has proceeded.

Now I would have every one who hears me bring what I have said home as a solemn truth to his own mind;—the solemn truth, that there is nothing indifferent in our conduct, no part of it without its duties, no room for trifling; lest we trifle with eternity. It is very common to speak of our political and social privileges as *rights*, which we may do what we like with; whereas they merely impose *duties* on us in God's sight. A man says “I have a right to do this or that, I have a right to give my vote here or there; I have a right to further this or that measure.” Doubtless you *have* a right,—you have the right of freewill,—you have from your birth the birthright of being a free agent, of doing right or wrong, of saving yourself or ruining yourself; you have the right, that is, you have the power,—(to speak plainly) the power to damn yourself; but (alas!) a poor consolation will it be to you in the next world, to know that your ruin was all your own fault, as brought upon you by yourself,—for what you have said comes to nothing more than this; and be quite sure men do not lose their souls,

by some one extraordinary act but by a course of acts ; and the careless or, rather, the self-sufficient and haughty-minded use of your political power, this way or that at your pleasure, which is now so common, is among those acts by which men save or lose them. The young man whom Solomon speaks of, thought he had a right to indulge his lusts, or, as the rich man in the Gospel, to "take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry ;" but the preacher says to him, "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth ; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes ; *but know thou, for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.*"*

So, again, many a man, when warned against the sin of leaving the Church, or of wandering about from one place of worship to another, says, "he has a right to do so." So it is, he has a strange notion that it is an Englishman's right to think what he will, and do what he will, in matters of religion. Nay, it *is* the right of the *whole world*, not ours alone ; it is the attribute of all rational beings to have a right to do wrong, if they will. Yet, after all, there is but one right way, and there are a hundred wrong ways. You *may* do as you will ; but the first who exercised that right was the devil when he fell ; and every one of us, when he does this or that in matters between himself and his God, merely because he *wills* it, and not for conscience' sake, is (so far) following the devil's pattern.

Now let us put aside these vain fancies, and look at our position steadily. Every one of us here assembled is either a vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction ; or rather, I should say, *will be* such at the last day, and now is acting *towards* the one or the other. We cannot judge each other, we cannot judge ourselves. We only know about ourselves whether or no we are in some measure trying to serve God ; we know he has loved us and "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ," and desires our salvation. We know about others around us that they too have been blessed by the same Saviour, and are to be looked on as our brethren, till, by word or deed, they openly renounce their brotherhood. Still it is true that the solemn process of *separation* between bad and good is ever going on. The net has, at present, gathered of every kind. At the end of the world will be the final division ; meanwhile there is a gradual sorting and sifting, silent but sure, towards it. It is also true that all the matters which come before us in the course of life are the trials of our faith, and instruments of our purification. It is also true that certain principles and actions are right, and others wrong. It is true, moreover, that our

* Eccles. xi. 9.

part lies in finding out what is right, and observing and contending for it. And without judging of our brethren's state, and, again, without being over-earnest about little matters, it is our duty plainly to witness against others when we think them wrong, and to impress our seriousness upon them by our very manner towards them; lest we suffer sin in them, and so become partakers of it.

If all this be true, may God Himself, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, enable us heartily to act upon it! May He give us that honesty and simplicity of mind, which looks at things as He views them, realizes what is unseen, puts aside all the shadows and mists of pride, party feeling, or covetousness; and, not only knows and does what is right, but does it because it knows it, and that not from mere reason, and on grounds of argument, but from the heart itself, from that inward and pure sense, and scrupulous fear, and keen faith, and generous devotion, which does not need arguments, except as a means of strengthening itself, and of persuading and satisfying others.

S E R M O N X V I .

THE CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.

2 TIM. ii. 20.

In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth: and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

IN these words St. Paul speaks of the Church as containing within it good and bad, after our Saviour's pattern, who, in the parables of the Net and of the Tares, had, from the first, announced the same serious truth. That Holy House which Christ formed in order to be the treasury and channel of His grace to mankind, over which His Apostles presided at the first, and after them others whom they appointed, was, even from their time, the seat of unbelief and unholiness as well as of true religion. Even among the Apostles themselves, one was "a devil." No wonder then that ever since, whether among the rulers or

the subjects of the Church, sin has abounded, where nothing but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost should have been found. It is so at this day ; our eyes see it ; we cannot deny it.

But though we all see it, we do not all see it in that particular light which Scripture sheds upon it. We often account for it differently, we view it in a different relation to other truths, from that in which it really exists. In other words, we admit the fact, but adopt our own theory about it. I will explain what I mean, which will introduce a subject worth considering.

The sight of the sins of Christians has led us to speak of what are called the Visible and the Invisible Church in what seems an unscriptural way. The word Church, applied to the body of Christians in this world, means but one in thing in Scripture, a visible body invested with invisible privileges. Scripture does not speak of two bodies, one visible, the other invisible, each with its own complement of members. But this is a common notion at present ; and it is an erroneous, and (I will add) a dangerous notion.

It is true there are some senses in which we may allowably talk of the Visible and Invisible Church. I am not finding fault with mere expressions ; one is not bound in common discourse to use every word with scientific precision. It is allowable to speak of the Visible and of the Invisible Church, as two sides of one and the same thing, separated by our minds only, not in reality. For instance, in political matters, we sometimes speak of England as a nation and sometimes as a state ; not meaning different things, but one certain identical thing viewed in a different relation. When we speak of the Nation, we take into account its variety of local rights, interests, attachments, customs, opinions ; the character of its people, and the history of that character's formation. On the other hand, when we speak of the State, we imply the notion of orders, ranks, and powers, of the legislative and executive departments, and the like. In like manner, no harm can come of the distinction of the Church into Visible and Invisible, while we view it as, on the whole, but one in different aspects ; as Visible, because consisting (for instance) of clergy and laity,—as Invisible, because resting for its life and strength upon unseen influences and gifts from heaven. This is not really to divide into two, any more than to discriminate (as they say) between concave and convex, is to divide a curve line ; which looked at outwardly is convex, but looked at inwardly, concave.

Again, we may consider the Church in one century as different from the Church in another. We may speak of the modern Church and the ancient Church ; and this without meaning that these are two bodies, merely by way of denoting difference of time. In a similar way we

talk of the Jewish Church and the Christian, though really both Churches are one, only under different Dispensations. "What is meant," will you ask, "by the Church in one age being the same as the Church in another?" plainly this, that there is no real line of demarcation between them, that the one is but the continuation of the other, and that you may as well talk of two Churches at this moment in the north and south of England, as two in different centuries. Properly speaking, the One Church is the whole body gathered together from all ages; so that the Church of this very age is but part of it, and this in the same sense in which the Church in England, again, in this day, is but part of the present Church Catholic. In the next world this whole Church will be brought together in one, whenever its separate members lived, and then too all its unsound and unfruitful members will be dropped, so that nothing but holiness will remain in it. Here, then, is a second sense in which we may discriminate between the Church Visible and Invisible. The body of the elect, contemplated as it will be hereafter, nay, as it already exists in Paradise, we may, if we will, call the Church, and, since this blessed consummation takes place in the unseen world, we may call it the Invisible Church. Doubtless, we may speak of the Invisible Church in the sense of the Church in glory, or the Church in rest. There is no error in such a mode of speech. We do not make two Churches, we only view the Christian body as existing in the world of spirits; and the present Church visible, so far as it really has part and lot in the same blessedness.

Still further, we may, by a figure of speech, speak of the members of the existing Church, who are at present walking in God's faith and fear, as the Invisible Church; not meaning thereby that they constitute a separate body, which is not the case, but by a mental abstraction, separating them off in imagination from the rest, speaking of them as invisible because we do not know them, and speaking of them as peculiarly the Church because they are what all Christians are intended and ought to be, and are all that would remain of the Church Visible, did the day of judgment suddenly come. In like manner, speaking politically, we talk of the Clergy as the Church: here is a parallel instance, in which a part of a body is viewed as the whole; still, who would say that the Laity are one Church by themselves, and the Clergy by themselves another?

In all these senses then, whether we speak of the Church as invisibly blest and succoured, or as triumphant hereafter, or in relation to its true members, who are its substantial support and glory, we may allowably make mention of the Invisible Church. But if we conceive of the

Invisible as one, and the Visible as another, as if there were one body without spiritual privileges, of good and bad together, and another of good only, with spiritual privileges, surely we speak without warrant, or rather without leave of Holy Scripture.

The Church of Christ, as Scripture teaches, is a visible body, invested with, or (I may say) existing in invisible privileges. Take the analogy of the human body by way of illustration. Considering man according to his animal nature, I might speak of him as having an organized visible frame, sustained by an unseen spirit. When the soul leaves the body it ceases to be a body, it becomes a corpse. So the Church would cease to be the Church, did the Holy Spirit leave it; and it does not exist at all except in the Spirit. Or, consider the figure of a tree, which is our Lord's own instance. A vine has many branches, and they are all nourished by the sap which circulates throughout. There may be dead branches, still they are upon one and the self-same tree. Were they as numerous as the sound ones, were they a hundred times as many, they would not form a tree by themselves. Were all the branches dead, were the stock dead, then it would be a dead tree. But any how, we could never say they were two trees. Such is the Scripture account of the Church, a living body with branches, some dead, some living; as in the text by another figure: "In a great house there are vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour." Can any account be plainer than this is? Why divide into two, when the only reason for so dividing, viz. the improbability that good and bad should be together, is superseded, as irrelevant, by our Lord and His Apostles themselves? Very various things are said of the Church; sometimes it is spoken of as glorious and holy, sometimes as abounding in offences and sins. It is natural, perhaps, at first sight, to invent, in consequence, the hypothesis of two Churches, as the Jews have dreamed of two Messiahs; but, I say, our Saviour has implied that it is unnecessary, that these opposite descriptions of it are not really incompatible; and if so, what reason remains for doing violence to the sacred text?

Consider these various descriptions, carefully examine them, and say, why it is not possible to adjust them together in one subject, directly we know that it is lawful to do so? Consider how they were all fulfilled in the case of the Corinthians, which is expressly given in Scripture. For instance, the Church is made up of ranks and offices. "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." It is inhabited by the Holy Ghost; "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath

many members, and all the members of that one body, though many, are one body ; so also is Christ." Its Sacraments are the instruments which the Holy Ghost uses : "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Yet, in spite of these precious gifts, the Church consists of bad as well as good ; for the Corinthians, though "the temple of the Holy Ghost," are reproved by St. Paul for being "puffed up," "contentious," and carnal."

Now, in answer to this account of the Church, as one and not double, it may be objected, that "surely it is impossible that bad men can really have God's grace within them, or that the irreligious or secular can be properly called justified or elect ; yet such men are outwardly in the Church, so that there are two Churches anyhow, an outward and an inward." Or, again, it may be said that "repentance and faith are confessedly necessary in order to enjoy the Christian privileges ; those, therefore, who have not these requisites, certainly have not the privileges, that is, are not members of Christ's true Church ; from which again it follows, that there certainly are two bodies, whatever words we use." It will be added, perhaps, that "Simon Magus, though he had been baptized, was unregenerate, being addressed by St. Peter as being 'in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.'"^{*} On the other hand it may be argued that "there are good men outside the Visible Church, viz. among Dissenters, who, as being good, must necessarily be in the Invisible Church ; and thus there certainly are two Churches." On the whole, then, there are these two arguments to prove that the word Church has two distinct meanings in Scripture : first, that there are bad men in the Visible Church, next, that certain good men are out of it :—both being derived from *the actual state of things which we see*, which is supposed to be a legitimate comment upon the words of Scripture.

1. We will first take the objection that bad men are in the Visible Church ; what is this to prove ? Let us observe. It is maintained that "bad men cannot be members of the true Church, therefore there is a true Church distinct from the Visible Church." But we shall be nearer the truth, if, instead of saying "bad men cannot be members of the true Church," we word it, "bad men cannot be true members of the Church." Does not this meet all that reason requires, yet without leaning to the inference that the Church Visible is not the true Church. Again, it is said that "the Visible Church has not the gifts of grace because wicked men are members of it, who, of course, cannot have

* Acts viii. 23.

them." What! must the Church be without them herself, because she is not able to impart them to wicked men? What reasoning is this? because certain individuals of a body have them not, therefore the body has them not! Surely it is possible that certain members of a body should be debarred, under circumstances, from its privileges; and this we consider to be the case with bad men.

Let us return to the instance of a tree, already used. Is a dead branch part or not part of a tree? You may decide this way or that, but you will never say, because the branch is dead, that therefore the tree has no sap. It is a dead branch of a living tree, not a branch of a dead tree. In like manner, irreligious men are dead members of the one Visible Church, which is living and true, not members of a Church which is dead. Because they are dead, it does not follow that the Visible Church to which they belong is dead also.

Or, consider the parallel of a body politic. Are persons, who are under disabilities, members of it or not? Are convicts? Prisoners are debarred from certain rights, but they are still members of the state, and, after a while, recover what they have forfeited.

The case is the same as regards the Church. Its invisible privileges range throughout it; but there may be, on the part of individuals, obstacles or impediments which suspend *their* enjoyment of them. It is one thing to be admitted into the body, and another thing to enjoy its privileges. While men are impenitent, the grace of the Christian election does not operate in their case. And in proportion to their carelessness and profaneness do they quench the Spirit. Hence it is that faith is necessary for our justification, as an indispensable condition where it can be had. Simon Magus, we may securely grant, was profited nothing by his baptism; the font of regeneration was opened upon him, but his heart was closed. The blessing was put into his hand, but he had not that which alone could apprehend and apply it. It was sealed up from him, and only penitence and faith could unseal it. Therefore St. Peter bids him repent, that he might receive it. He went on further in wickedness, as history informs us, and then, of course, the gift thus attached to him, but not enjoyed, would prove, at the last day, but a cause of heavier condemnation. I do not presume to say that this is the true explanation of *his case*, which is not told us, but as a mode of explaining it, and yet keeping clear of the conclusion, for the sake of which it is usually brought. If there be one such explanation, there may be others.*

In like manner, when men fall into sin, *they* lose the light of God's

* Vide Note at the end of this Volume.

countenance ; but why should it be withdrawn from the Holy Church, for *their* individual transgressions ?

There was a controversy, in early times, which illustrates still further the foregoing explanation of the difficulty. It was disputed whether the baptism administered by clergy who were heretics, and had been put out of the Church, was valid. And at length it was decided as follows : that the baptism was valid for the primary purpose of baptism, viz. that of admitting into the visible body of Christ, but that the *enjoyment* of its privileges was suspended, while the parties receiving it remained in heretical communion. On coming over to the Church Catholic, they were formally admitted by confirmation, and released from the bond under which they had hitherto lain.

If, then, I am asked what is to be thought of the state of irreligious men in the Church, I answer, that if open sinners, or heretics, or leaders in dissent, be meant, they are to be put out of it by the competent authority. As to those who are not such, we cannot determine about their real condition, for we cannot see their hearts. Many may seem fair and specious to us, who are really dead in God's sight ; and these, of course, cannot possess the gifts of grace any more than Simon Magus. Or they may be lukewarm, unstable, inconsistent ; and may thus have forfeited, more or less, the privileges which have graciously been committed to them. But how does all this show that the Visible Church has not the true and spiritual gifts of the Gospel attached to her.

2. Now, to consider the second objection that is urged, viz. that "there are good men external to the Visible Church, therefore there is a second Church, called the Invisible." In answer, I observe, that as every one, who has been duly baptized, is, in one sense, in the Church, even though his sins since have hid God's countenance from him ; so, if a man has not been baptized, be he ever so correct and exemplary in his conduct, this does not prove that he has received regeneration, which is the peculiar and invisible gift of the Church. What is regeneration ? It is the gift of a new and spiritual nature ; but men have, through God's blessing, obeyed and pleased Him without it. The Israelites were not regenerated ; Cornelius, the Centurion, was not regenerated, when his prayers and alms came up before God. No outward conduct, however consistent, can be a criterion, to our mortal judgments, of this unearthly and mysterious privilege. Therefore, when you bring to me the case of religious Dissenters, I rejoice at hearing of them. If they know no better, God, we trust, will accept them as he did the Shunammite. I wish, with all my heart, they partook the full blessings of the Church ; but all my wishing cannot change God's

appointments ; and His appointment, I say, is this, that the Church Visible should be the minister, and Baptism the instrument of Regeneration. But I have said not a word to imply that a man, if he knows no better, may not be exemplary in his generation without it.

So much in answer to this objection ; but the same consideration throws light upon the former difficulty also, that of inconsistent men being in the Church. Regeneration, I say, is a new birth, or the giving of a new nature. Now, let it be observed, there is nothing impossible in the thing itself, (though we believe it is not so,) but nothing impossible in the very *notion* of a regeneration being accorded even to impenitent sinners. I do not say regeneration in its fulness, for that includes in it perfect happiness and holiness, to which it tends from the first ; yet regeneration in a true and sufficient sense, in its primary qualities. For the essence of regeneration is the communication of a higher and diviner nature ; and sinners may have this gift, though it would be a curse to them, not a blessing. The devils may have a nature thus higher and more divine than man, yet they are not preserved thereby from evil.

And if this is the case even with sinners, much more is regeneration conceivable in the instance of children, who have done neither good nor evil. Nor does it at all follow, even though they grow up disobedient, and are a scandal to the Church, that therefore the Church has not conveyed to them a great gift, an initiation into the powers of the world to come.

If, indeed, this gracious privilege ensured religious obedience, then, truly, disobedience in those who have been admitted into the Church would prove that the Church had not conveyed it to them. But until a man is ready to maintain that the Spirit cannot be “ quenched,” he has no warrant for saying that it has not been given.

Now then, after these explanations, let me ask, in what is this whole doctrine concerning the Church, which I have been giving, *inconsistent* ? What *difficulty* does it present to force us to reject the plain word of Scripture about it, and to imagine a Visible Church with no privileges at all, and an Invisible Church of real Christians exclusively with them ? Surely, nothing but the influence of a human system, acting on us, can make us read Scripture so perversely ! and how is it a less violence to deny that the Church which the Apostle set up, and which is, in matter of fact, among us at this day, is (what Scripture says it is) the pillar and ground of the Truth, the Mother of us all, the House of God, the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost, the Spouse of Christ, a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and destined to remain even to the end of the world,—how is this a less

violent perversion of Scripture truth than theirs, who, when Scripture says that Christ is God, obstinately maintain He is a mere man?

I will notice in conclusion one objection which subtle minds may make the statements now set before you. It may be said that the Church has forfeited its early privileges, by allowing itself to remain in a state of sin and disorder which Christ never intended: for instance, "that from time to time there have been great corruptions in it, especially under the ascendancy of the Papal power: that there have been very many scandalous appointments to its highest dignities, that infidels have been bishops, that men have administered baptism or ordination not believing that grace was imparted in those sacred ordinances, and, that in particular in our own country, heretics and open sinners, whom Christ would have put out of the Church, are suffered, by a sin on the part of the Church, to remain within it unrebuked, uncondemned." This is what is sometimes said; and I confess, had we not Scripture to consult, it would be a very specious argument against the Church's present power, now at the distance of eighteen hundred years from the Apostles. It would certainly seem as if the conditions not having been fully observed on which that power was granted, it was forfeited. But here the case of the Jewish Church affords us the consoling certainty, that God does not so visit, even though He might, and that His gifts and calling "are without repentance."* Christ's Church cannot be in a worse condition than that of Israel when He visited it in the flesh; yet He expressly assures us that in His day "the Scribes and Pharisees," wicked men as they were, "sat in Moses' seat," and were to be obeyed in what they taught; and we find, in accordance with this information, that Caiaphas, "because he was the high priest," had the gift of prophecy,—had it, though he did not know he had it, nay, in spite of his being one of the foremost in accomplishing our Lord's crucifixion. Surely, then, we may infer, that, however fallen the Church now is from what it once was, however unconscious of its power, it still has the gift, as of old time, to convey and withdraw the Christian privileges, "to bind and to loose," to consecrate, to bless, to teach the Truth in all necessary things, to rule, and to prevail.

But if these things be so if the Church Visible really has invisible privileges, what must we think, my brethren, of the general spirit of this day, which looks upon the Church as but a civil institution, a creation and a portion of the state? What shall be thought of the notion that it depends upon the breath of princes, or upon the enactments of human law? What, again, shall be thought of those who fiercely and rancor-

* Rom. xi. 29.

ously oppose and revile what is really an Ordinance of God and the place where His honour dwelleth ? Even to the Jewish priesthood after the blood of the Redeemer was upon it, even to it St. Paul deferred, signifying that God's high priest was not to be reviled ; and if so, surely much less the rulers of a branch of the Church, which, whatever have been its sins in times past, yet is surely innocent (as we humbly and fervently trust) of any inexpressible crime. Moreover, what an unworthy part they act, who knowing and confessing the real claims of the Church, yet allow them to be lightly treated and forgotten without uttering a word in their behalf ; who, from secular policy, or other insufficient reason, bear to hear our spiritual rulers treated as mere civil functionaries, without instructing or protesting against or foregoing intimacy with those who despise them, nay even co-operating with them cordially, as if they could serve two masters, Christ and the world ! And how melancholy is the general spectacle in this day of ignorance, doubt, perplexity, misbelief, perverseness, on the subject of this great doctrine, to say nothing of the jealousy, hatred, and unbelieving spirit with which the Church is regarded ! Surely, thus much we are forced to grant, that, be the privileges vested in the Church what they may, yet, at present, they are, as to their full fruits, suspended in our branch of it by our present want of faith ; nor can we expect that the glories of Christ's Kingdom will again be manifested in it, till we repent, confess " our offences and the offences of our forefathers ;" and, instead of trusting to an arm of flesh, claim for the Church what God has given it, for Christ's sake, " whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear."

SERMON XVII.

THE VISIBLE CHURCH AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH.

HEB. xii. 1.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

THE warning and consolation given by the Apostle to the Hebrews, amid their sufferings for the truth's sake, were as follows: they were to guard against unbelief, that easily-besetting sin under temptation, chiefly, and above all, by "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith;" but, besides this, a secondary stay was added. So glorious and holy is our Lord, though viewed in His human nature, so perfect when He was tempted, so heavenly even upon earth, that sinners, such as we are, cannot endure the sight of Him at first. Like the blessed Apostle in the book of Revelation, we "fall at His feet as dead." So, in mercy to us, without withdrawing His presence, He has included within it, His Saints and Angels, a great company of created beings, nay, of those who once were sinners, and subjects of His kingdom upon earth; that thus we may be encouraged by the example of others before us to look unto Him and live. St. Paul, in the foregoing chapter, enumerates many of the Ancient Saints who had run the course of faith; and then he says in the text, "Wherefore, let us also, being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." And presently he speaks in still more high and glowing language of the Christian Church, that august assemblage which Christ had formed of all that was holy in heaven and earth. "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant."

And much is needed, in every age as a remedy against unbelief, that support which St. Paul suggested to the Hebrews in persecution, the vision of the saints of God, and of the Kingdom of Heaven. Much is it needed, in every age, by those who have set their hearts to serve God, because they are few, and faint for company. We are told, expressly, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." On the other hand, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* Alas! is it not discouragement enough to walk in a path of self-denial, to combat with our natural lusts and high imaginations, to have the war of the flesh, that the war with the world must be added to it? Is it not enough to be pilgrims and soldiers all our days, but we must hear the mutual greetings, and exulting voices, of those who choose the way of death, and must walk not only in pain but in solitude? Where is the blessing upon the righteous, where the joy of faith, the comfort of love, the triumph of self-mastery, in such dreariness and desolateness? Who are to sympathize with us in our joys and sorrows, who are to spur us on by the example of their own success before us? St. Paul answers us,—the cloud of witnesses of former days. Let us then consider our need and its remedy.

1. Certainly it cannot be denied that, if we surrender our hearts to Christ and obey God, we shall be in the number of the few. So it has been in every age, so it will be to the end of time. It is hard indeed, to find a man who gives himself up honestly to his Saviour. In spite of all the mercies poured upon us, yet in one way or other we are in danger of being betrayed by our own hearts, and taking up with a pretence of religion instead of the substance. Hence, in a country called Christian, the many live to the world. Nay, it would seem that as Christianity spreads, its fruit become less; or at least, does not increase with its growth. It seems (some have said) as if a certain portion of truth were in the world, a certain number of the elect in the Church, and, as you increased its territory, you scattered this remnant to and fro, and made them seem fewer, and made them feel more desolate.

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves;"† what our Lord addressed to His Apostles is fulfilled to this day in all those who obey Him. They are sprinkled up and down the world; they are separated the one from the other, they are bid quit each other's dear society, and sent afar off to those who are differently minded. Their choice of profession and employment is not their own. Outward circumstances, over which they have no control, determine their line of

* Matt. vii. 13, 14.

† Matt. x. 16.

life; accidents bring them to this place or that place, not knowing whither they go; not knowing the persons to whom they unite themselves, they find, almost blindly, their home and their company. And in this, moreover, differing from the Apostles, and very painfully; that the Apostles knew each other, and could communicate one with another, and could form, nay, were bound to form one body; but now, those honest and true hearts, in which the good seed has profitably fallen, do not even know each other; nay, even when they think they can single out their fellows, yet are they not allowed to form a separate society with them.

They do not know each other; they do not know themselves; they do not dare take to themselves the future titles of God's elect, though they be really reserved for them; and the nearer they are towards heaven, so much the more lowly do they think of themselves. "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof,"* was the language of him who had greater faith than any in Israel. Doubtless, they do not know their own blessedness, nor can they single out those who are their fellows in blessedness. God alone sees the heart; now and then, as they walk their way, they see glimpses of God's work in others; they take hold of them awhile in the dark, but soon lose them; they hear their voices, but cannot find them. Some few, indeed, are revealed to them, in a measure. Among those with whom their lot is cast, whom they see continually, one or two, perhaps, are given them to rejoice in, but not many even of these. For so it has pleased the Dresser of the Vineyard, who seems purposed that His own should not grow too thick together; and if they seem to do so, He prunes His vine that, seeming to bear less, it may bear better. He plucks off some of the promise of the vintage; and they who are left, mourn over their brethren whom God has taken to Himself, not understanding that it is no strange providence, but the very rule of His government to leave His servants few and solitary.

And, even when they know each other, (as far as man can know man,) still, as I have said, they may not form an exclusive communion together. Of course, every one will naturally live most with those whom he likes most; but it is one thing to have a preference, and quite another to draw a line of exclusion, and to form a select company within the Church. The Visible Church of God is that one only company which Christians know as yet; it was set up at Pentecost, with the Apostles for founders, their successors for rulers, and all professing Christian people for members. In this Visible Church the Church In-

* Matt. viii. 8.

visible is gradually moulded and matured. It is formed slowly and variously by the Blessed Spirit of God, in the instance of this man and that, who belong to the general body. But all these blessed fulfilments of God's grace are as yet but parts of the visible Church; they grow from it; they depend upon it; they do not hang upon each other; they do not form a body together; there is no Invisible Church yet formed; it is but a name as yet; a name given to those who are hidden, and known to God only, and as yet but half formed, the unripe and gradually ripening fruit which grows on the stem of the Church Visible. As well might we attempt to foretell the blossoms which will at length turn to account and ripen for the gathering, and then counting up all these and joining them together in our minds, call them by the name of a tree, as attempt now to associate in one the true elect of God. They are scattered about amid the leaves of that Mystical Vine which is seen, and receive their nurture from its trunk and branches. They live on its Sacraments and its Ministry; they gain light and salvation from its rites and ordinances; they communicate with each other through it; they obey its rulers; they walk together with its members; they do not dare to judge of this man or that man, on their right hand or their left, whether or not he is absolutely of the number of those who shall be saved; they accept all as their brethren in Christ, as partakers of the same general promises, who have not openly cast off Christ,—as really brethren, till death comes, as those who fulfil their calling most strictly.

Yet, at the same time, while in faith they love those, all around them, who are called by Christ's name, and forbear to judge about their real state in God's sight, they cannot but see much in many of them to hurt and offend them; they cannot but feel, most painfully, the presence of that worldly atmosphere which, however originating, is around them; they feel the suffocation of those vapours in which the many are content to remain; and while they cannot trace the evil to its real authors individually, they are sure that it is an evil to be avoided and pointed out, and originating somewhere or other in the Church. Hence, in their spheres, whether high or low, the faithful few are witnesses; they are witnesses for God and Christ, in their lives, and by their protestations, without judging others, or exalting themselves. They are witnesses, in various degrees, to various persons, more or less, as each needs it, differing from the multitude variously, as each of that multitude, before whom they witness, is better or worse, and as they themselves are more or less advanced in the truth; still, on the whole, they are witnesses, as light witnesses against darkness by the contrast;—giving good and receiving back evil; receiving back on themselves the contempt, the ridicule, and the opposition of the world, mixed, indeed,

with some praise and reverence, reverence which does not last long, but soon becomes fear and hatred. And hence it is that religious men need some consolation to support them, which the Visible Church seems, at first sight, not to supply, when the overflowings of ungodliness make them afraid.

2. Now then, secondly, in such circumstances what shall we say? Are they but solitary witnesses, each in his place? Is the Church which they see really no consolation to them at all, except as contemplated by faith in respect of its invisible gifts? or does it, after all, really afford them some sensible stay, a vision of Heaven, of peace and purity, antagonist to the world that now is, in spite of the evil which abounds in it, and overlays it? Through God's great mercy, it is actually, in no small degree, a present and a sensible consolation, as I proceed to show.

In truth, do what he will, Satan cannot quench or darken the Light of the Church. He may incrust it with his own evil creations, but even opaque bodies transmit rays, and Truth shines with its own heavenly lustre, though "under a bushel." The Holy Spirit has vouchsafed to take up His abode in the Church, and the Church will ever bear, on its front, the visible signs of its hidden privilege. Viewed at a little distance, its whole surface will be illuminated, though the light really streams from apertures which might be numbered. The scattered witnesses thus become, in the language of the text, "a cloud," like the Milky Way in the heavens.

We have, in Scripture, the records of those who lived and died by faith in the old time, and nothing can deprive us of them. The strength of Satan lies in his being seen to have the many on his side; but, when we read the Bible, this argument loses its hold over us. There, we find that we are not solitary; that others, before us, have been in our very condition, have had our feelings, undergone our trials, and laboured for the prize which we are seeking. Nothing more elevates the mind than the consciousness of being one of a great and victorious company. Does not the soldier exult in his commander, and consider his triumph as his own? He is but one, yet he identifies himself with the army, and the cause in which he serves, and dwells upon the thought of victories, and those who win them, more than on casual losses and defeats. Does not a native of a powerful country feel it a joy and boast to be so? Do we not hear men glory in being born in Englishmen? And they go to and fro, gazing on the works of their own days, and the monuments of their forefathers, and say to themselves that their race is a noble one. Much more fully, much more reasonably, is this the boast of a Christian, and without aught of arrogant or carnal feeling. He knows, from God's word, that he is "citizen of no mean city." He feels that his is no

upstart line, but very ancient ; Almighty God having purposed to bring many sons unto glory through His Son, and begetting them again, in their separate ages, to do Him service. He is one of a host, and all those blessed Saints he reads of are his brethren in the faith. He finds, in the history of the past, a peculiar kind of consolation, counteracting the influence of the world that is seen. He cannot tell who the saints are now on earth ; those yet unborn are known to God only ; but the Saints of former times are sealed for Heaven and are in their degree revealed to him. The spirits of the just made perfect encourage him to follow them. This is why it is a Christian's characteristic to look back on former times. The man of this world lives in the present, or speculates about the future ; but faith rests upon the past and is content. It makes the past the mirror of the future. It recounts the list of faithful servants of God, to whom St. Paul refers in the text, and no longer feels sad as if it were alone. Abraham and the Patriarchs, Moses, Samuel, and the prophets, David and the kings who walked in his steps, these are the Christian's forefathers. By degrees he learns to have them as familiar images before his mind, to unite his cause with theirs, and, since their history comforts him, to defend them in his own day. Hence he feels jealous for their honour, and when they are attacked he answers eagerly, so as to surprise those who are contented with things as they are ; but, truly, he is too grateful, too affectionate, too much interested in the matter, to be complimentary and generous towards their assailants. He had rather the present day should be proved captious, than a former day mistaken.

But to return : what a world of sympathy and comfort is thus opened to us in the communion of Saints ! The heathen, who sought truth most earnestly, fainted for want of companions ; every one stood by himself. They were tempted to think that all their best feelings were but an empty name, and that it mattered not whether they served God or disobeyed Him. But Christ has "gathered together the children of God that were scattered abroad," and brought them near to each other in every time and place. Are we young, and in temptation or trial ? we cannot be in worse circumstances than Joseph. Are we in sickness ? Job will surpass us in sufferings as in patience. Are we in perplexities and anxieties, with conflicting duties of a bewildered path, having to please unkind superiors, yet without offending God ? so grievous a trial as David's we cannot have, when Saul persecuted him. Is it our duty to witness for the truth among sinners ? No Christian can at this day be so hardly circumstanced as Jeremiah. Have we domestic trials ? Job, Jacob, and David, were afflicted in their children. It is easy indeed to say all this, and many a man may hear it said and not feel moved by it,

and conceive it is a mere matter of words, easy and fitting indeed to say, but a cold consolation in actual suffering. And I will own that a man cannot profit by these considerations all at once. A man, who has never thought of the history of the Saints, will gain little benefit from it on first taking up the subject when he comes into trouble. He will turn from it disappointed. He may say, "my pain or my trial is not the less because another had it a thousand years since." But the consolation in question comes not in the way of argument but by habit. A tedious journey seems shorter when gone in company, yet, be the travellers many or few, each goes over the same ground.

Such is the Christian's feeling towards all Saints, but it is especially excited by the Church of Christ and by all that belong to it. For what is that Church but a pledge and proof of God's never-dying love and power from age to age? He set it up in mercy to mankind, and its presence among us is a proof that in spite of our sins He has not yet forsaken us;—"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." He set it up on the foundation of His Twelve Apostles, and promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against it; and its presence among us is a proof of His power. He set it up to succeed to the four monster kingdoms which then were; and it lived to see those kingdoms of the earth crumble into dust and come to nought. It lived to see society new formed upon the model of the governments which last to this day. It lives still, and it is older than them all. Much and rightly as we reverence old lineage, noble birth, and illustrious ancestry, yet the royal dynasty of the Apostles is far older than all the kingly families which are now on the earth. Every Bishop of the Church whom we behold, is a lineal descendant of St. Peter and St. Paul after the order of a spiritual birth;—a noble thought, if we could realize it! True it is that at various times the Bishops have forgotten their high rank and acted unworthily of it. So have kings and princes, yet noble they were by blood in spite of their personal errors, and the line of their family is not broken or degraded thereby. And in like manner, true though it be that the descendants of the Apostles have before now lived to this world, have fancied themselves of this world, have thought their office secular and civil, or if religious, yet at least "of men and by man," not "by Jesus Christ," have judged it much to have riches, or to sit in high places, or to have rank and consideration, or to have the fame of letters, or to be king's counsellors, or to live in courts,—yet, granting the utmost, for all this they are not the less inspiring an object to a believing mind, which sees in each of them the earnest of His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He said, He would be with His Church: He has continued it alive to this day. He has continued the line of

His Apostles onwards through every age and all troubles and perils of the world. Here then, surely, is somewhat of encouragement for us amid our loneliness and weakness. The presence of every Bishop suggests a long history of conflicts and trials, sufferings and victories, hopes and fears, through many centuries. His presence at this day is the fruit of them all. He is the living monument of those who are dead. He is the promise of a bold fight and a good confession and a cheerful martyrdom now, if needful, as was done by those of old time. We see their figures on our walls, and their tombs are under our feet; and we trust, nay, we are sure, that God will be to us in our day what He was to them. In the words of the Psalmist, "The Lord hath been mindful of us: He will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron."^{*}

And more especially does the sight of our living Apostles bring before our thoughts the more favoured of their line, who, at different times, have fought the good fight of faith valiantly and gloriously. Blessed be God, He has given us to know them as if we had lived in their day and enjoyed their pattern and instructions. Alas! in spite of the variety of books now circulated among all classes of the community, how little is known about the Saints of past times! How is this? has Christ's Church failed in any age? or have His witnesses betrayed their trust? are they not our bone and our flesh? Have they not partaken the same spiritual food as ourselves and the same spiritual drink, used the same prayers, and confessed the same creed? If a man merely looks into the Prayer-book he will meet there with names about which, perhaps, he knows and cares nothing at all. A prayer we read daily is called the prayer of St. Chrysostom; a creed is called the creed of St. Anthanasius; another creed is called the Nicene Creed; in the Articles we read of St. Augustine and St. Jerome; in the Homilies of many other such besides. What do these names mean? Sad it is, you have no heart to inquire after or celebrate those who are fellow-citizens with you, and your great benefactors! Men of this world spread each other's fame,—they vaunt loudly;—you see in every street the names and the statues of the children of men, you hear of their exploits in speeches and histories; yet you care not to know concerning those to whom you are indebted for the light of Gospel truth. Truly they were in their day men of God; they were rulers and teachers in the Church; they had received by succession of hands the power first given to the Apostles and now to us. They laboured and suffered and fainted not, and their writings remain to this day. Now a person who

* Psalms cxv. 12.

cultivates this thought, finds therein, through God's mercy, great encouragement. Say he is alone, his faith counted a dream, and his efforts to do good a folly, what then? He knows there have been times when his opinions were those of the revered and influential, and the opinions now in repute only not reprobated because they were not heard of. He knows that present opinions are the accident of the day, and that they will fall as they have risen. They will surely fall even though at a distant date! He labours for that time; he labours for five hundred years to come. He can bear in faith to wait five hundred years, to wait for an era long, long after he has mouldered into dust. The Apostles lived eighteen hundred years since; and as far as the Christian looks back, so far as he can afford to look forward. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, from first to last.

I referred just now to our Sacred Services; these again may be made to furnish a support to our faith and hope. He who comes to Church to worship God, be he high or low, enters into that heavenly world of Saints of which I have been speaking. For in the Services of worship we elicit and realize the invisible. I know, indeed, that Christ is then especially present, and vouchsafes to bless us; but I am speaking all along of the help given to us by sensible objects, and, even in this lower view, doubtless much is done for us in the course of divine worship. We read from the Bible of the Saints who have gone before us, and we make mention of them in our prayers. We thank God for them, we praise God with them, we pray God to visit us in mercy as He visited them. And every earthly thought or principle is excluded. The world no longer rules as it does abroad; no longer teaches, praises, blames, scoffs, wonders, according to its own false standard. It is merely spoken of as one of the three great enemies whom we are sworn to resist; it holds its proper place; and its doom is confidently predicted, the final victory of the Church over it. And, farther, it is much more impressive to hear and to see, than to read in a book. When we read the Bible and religious books in private, there is great comfort; but our minds are commonly more roused and encouraged in Church, when we see those great truths displayed and represented which Scripture speaks of. There we see "Jesus Christ evidently set forth, crucified among us." The ordinances which we behold, force the unseen truth upon our senses. The very disposition of the building, the subdued light, the aisles, the Altar, with its pious adornments, are figures of things unseen, and stimulate our fainting faith. We seem to see the heavenly courts, with Angels chanting, and Apostles and Prophets listening, as we read their writings in due course. And thus, even attendance on

a Sunday, may, through God's mercy, avail even in the case of those who have not given themselves up to Him,—not to their salvation (for no one can be saved by one or two observances merely, or without a life of faith,) but so far as to break in upon their dream of sin, and give them thoughts and notions which may be the germ of future good. Even to those, I say, who live to the world, the mere Sunday attendance at Church is a continual memento on their conscience, giving them a glimpse of things unseen, and rescuing them in a measure from the servitude of Mammon or of Belial. And therefore it is, that Satan's first attempt, when he would ruin a soul, is to prevail upon him to desecrate the Lord's day. And if such is the effect of coming to Church once a week, even to an undecided or carnal mind, how much more impressive and invigorating are the Services to serious men who come daily or frequently! Surely such attendance is a safeguard, such as amulets are said to be, a small thing to all appearance, but effectual. I say it with confidence, he who observes it will grow in time a different man from what he was, God working in him. His heart will be more heavenly and aspiring; the world will lie under his feet; he will be proof against its opinions, threats, blandishments, ridicule. His very mode of viewing things, his very voice, his manner, gait, and countenance, will speak of Heaven to those who know him well, though the many see nothing in him.

The many understand him not, and even in St. Paul or St. John would see but ordinary men. Yet at times such a one will speak effectually even to the many. In seasons of unusual distress or alarm, when men's minds faint for fear, then he will have a natural power over the world, and will seem to speak not as an individual, but as if in him was concentrated all the virtue and the grace of those many Saints who have been his life-long companions. He has lived with those who are dead, and he will seem to the world as one coming from the dead, speaking in the name of the dead, using the language of souls dead to things that are seen, revealing the mysteries of the heavenly world, and awing and controlling those who are wedded to this. What slight account did the centurion and the crew make of St. Paul, till a tempest had long time "lain on them" and "all hope that they should be saved was then taken away!" But then, though he had done no miracle, "he stood forth in the midst," exhorted and encouraged them, bade them take meat, acted as their priest, giving thanks to God and breaking bread in the presence of them all, and so made them "of good cheer." Such is the gift, deeply lodged and displayed at times, of those who have ascended into the third heaven. One living Saint, though there

be but one, is a pledge of the whole Church Invisible. Let this thought console us as it ought to do; let it have its full influence in us, and possess us. Let us "lift up our hearts," let us "lift them up unto the Lord!"

SERMON XVIII.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 18.

We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

MOSES prayed for this one thing, that he might "see God's glory;" and he was allowed to behold it in such measure, that, when he came down from the Mount, "the skin of his face shone," so that the people "were afraid to come nigh him." This privilege was vouchsafed only to him in this intimate way, and that but once; but a promise was given that at some future time it should be extended to the whole earth. God said to him, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," that glory which the Israelites had seen in glimpses and had profaned. Afterwards the prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk foretold, in like manner, that the earth should be filled with the Lord's glory and the knowledge of it. When Christ came, these promises were fulfilled, for, "we beheld His glory," St. John says, "the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father."*

In the chapter which ends with the text, St. Paul contrasts the shadows and earnestness under the Law, of "the glory that should follow" Christ's coming with that glory itself. He says that he and his brother Apostles are "not as Moses, who put a veil over his face." At length the glory of God in full measure was the privilege and birthright of all

* Ex. xxxiv. 30. Numb. xiv. 21. Is. xi. 9. Hab. ii. 14. John i. 14.

believers, who now, "in the unveiled face of Christ their Saviour, beheld the reflection of the Lord's glory," and were "changed into His likeness from one measure of glory to another." Our Saviour's words in his last prayer for His Apostles, and for all His disciples as included under them, convey to us the same gracious truth. He says, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them.*"

This glorious Dispensation, under which the Church now exists, is called by St. Paul, in the same chapter, "the ministration of the Spirit;" and again in the text, we are said to be changed into the glorious image of Christ "by the Spirit of the Lord."

And further, the Church, as being thus honoured and exalted by the presence of the Spirit of Christ, is called "the Kingdom of God," the "Kingdom of Heaven;" as, for instance, by our Lord Himself. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand:" "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."†

I propose now to make some remarks on this peculiar gift of the Gospel Dispensation, which, as in the foregoing passages, is spoken of as the gift of "the Spirit," the gift of "glory," and through which the Church has become what it was not before, the Kingdom of Heaven.

And here, before entering upon the subject, I would observe that as there is a sense in which the grant of glory was made even under the Law, as in its miracles, (as when the Israelites are condemned for having "seen the glory of the Lord and His miracles," and yet "not having hearkened to His voice,"‡) so in another point of view it belongs exclusively to the promised blessedness hereafter. Still there is a real and sufficient sense in which it is ascribed to the Christian Church, and what this is, is the question now before us.

1. In the first place, some insight is given into the force of the word "glory" as our present privilege, by considering the meaning of the title "Kingdom of Heaven," which, as has been just observed, has also belonged to the Church since Christ came. The Church is called by this name as being the court and domain of Almighty God, who retreated from the earth, as far as His kingly presence was concerned, when man fell. Not that He left Himself without witness in any age, but, even in His most gracious manifestations, still He conducted Himself as if in an enemy's country, "as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night."§ But when Christ had reconciled Him to His fallen creatures, He returned according to the prophecy, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; I will set my

* John xvii. 22.

† Matt. x. 7. John iii. 5.

‡ Numb. xiv. 22.

§ Jer. xiv. 8.

sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.”* From that time there has really been a heaven upon earth, in fulfilment of Jacob’s vision. Thenceforth the Church was not a carnal ordinance, made of perishable materials, like the Jewish Tabernacle, which had been a type of the Dispensation to which it belonged. It became “a kingdom which cannot be moved,” being sweetened, purified, and spiritualized by the pouring out of Christ’s blood in it. It became once more an integral part of that unseen, but really existing world, of which “the Lord is the everlasting Light ;” and it had fellowship with its blessed inhabitants. St. Paul thus describes it in his epistle to the Hebrews : “Ye are come to Mount Sion ;” to the true “mountain of the Lord’s House,” of which the earthly Sion was a type—“and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,”—that is, as he elsewhere calls it, “the Jerusalem that is above,” or, as he speaks in another place, “our citizenship is in heaven,”—“and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the festive concourse and Church of the First-born enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the perfected Just, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”†

Since then the Christian Church is a Heaven upon earth, it is not surprising that in some sense or other its distinguishing privilege or gift should be glory, for this is the one attribute which we ever attach to our notion of Heaven itself, according to the Scripture intimations concerning it. The glory here may be conceived of by considering what we believe of the glory hereafter.

2. Next, if we consider the variety and dignity of the gifts ministered by the Spirit, we shall, perhaps, discern, in a measure, why our state under the Gospel is called a state of glory. It is not uncommon in the present day, to divide the works of the Holy Ghost in the Church into two kinds, miraculous and moral. By *miraculous* are meant such as He manifested in the first ages of the Gospel, marvels out of the course of nature, addressed to our senses ; such as the power of healing, of raising the dead, and the like ; or, again, such as speaking with tongues or prophecy. On the other hand, by *moral* operations or influences are meant such as act upon our minds, and enable us to be what we otherwise could not be, holy and accepted in all branches of the Christian character ; in a word, all such as issue in sanctification as it is called. These distinct works of the Holy Spirit, viewed in their effects, are commonly called extraordinary and ordinary, or *gifts* and *graces* ; and it is usual to say, that gifts have ceased, and graces alone remain to us,

* 2 Cor. vi. 16. Ez. xxxvii. 26.

† Heb. xii. 22—24.

and, hence to limit the present "ministration of the Spirit" to certain influences on our moral nature, to the office of changing, renewing, purifying the heart and mind, implanting a good will, imparting knowledge of our duty and power to do it, and cultivating and maturing within us all right desires and habits, and leading us to all holy works. Now, all these influences and operations certainly do belong to the "ministration of the Spirit;" but in what appropriate sense can any effects wrought in us be called "glory?" Add to them the miracles which now have ceased, and you will indeed gain a more intelligible meaning of the word, but not even then any meaning peculiar to the Gospel. The Jewish Church was gifted by a more abiding super-human presence than the Christian, and with as over-powering miracles, yet it did not possess this privilege of glory. Again, its patriarchs and teachers rose to degrees of sanctification quite as much above our power of measuring them as those attained by Apostles and Martyrs under the Gospel; nor, to all human appearance, is the actual sanctification of the mass of Christians more true or complete than was that of the Jews: how then are we in a state of glory, and the Jewish Church not? Granting then that the gift of the Spirit mentioned in Scripture, includes in it both the miracles of the first ages and the influences of grace;—granting also, that the sanctifying grace bestowed on each Christian is given with far greater fulness, variety, and power, than it was vouchsafed to the Jews, whether it be eventually quenched or not; granting too that holiness is really the characteristic of that gift which the Holy Spirit ministers now, as miracles were its outward manifestation in the first ages;—still all this is not a sufficient account of it; it is not equivalent to our great Gospel privilege, which is something deeper, wider, and more mysterious, though including both miracles and graces. In truth, the Holy Ghost has taken up His abode in the Church as a sevenfold Spirit.

A little consideration will show this. For instance, is the gift of the body's immortality miraculous or moral? Neither, in the common sense of the words; yet it is a gift bestowed on us in this life and by the power of the Holy Ghost, according to the texts, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;" and "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His indwelling Spirit."* Again, is justification, or the application of Christ's merits to the soul, moral or miraculous? Neither; yet we are told, that we are "washed, hallowed, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."† Or, is the gift of the Holy Ghost in Ordination miraculous or

* 1 Cor. vi. 19. Rom. viii. 11.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

moral? It is neither the one nor the other, but a supernatural power of ministering effectually in holy things. Once more, is communion with Christ miraculous or moral? On the contrary, it is a real but mysterious union of nature with Him, according to the text; "we are members of His body, from His flesh, and from His bones."* Such reflections as these are calculated, perhaps, to give us somewhat of a deeper view than is ordinarily admitted, of the character of that gift which attends on the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and which is called the gift of glory. I do not say that any thing that has been just said has been sufficient to define it; rather I would maintain, that it cannot be defined. It cannot be limited; it cannot be divided, and exhausted by a division. This is the very faultiness of the division into miraculous and moral, useful as this may be for particular purposes, that it professes to embrace what is in fact incomprehensible and unfathomable. I would fain keep from the same mistake; and the instances already given may serve this purpose, enlarging our view without bounding it. The gift is denoted in Scripture by the vague and mysterious term "glory;" and all the descriptions we can give of it can only, and should only, run out into a mystery.

3. Perhaps, however, it may be questioned, whether the gift of the Spirit, now possessed by us, is really called by this name; with a view of making this quite clear, I will here recite a number of passages in order, in addition to those with which I began; and while I do so, I would have you observe in what close and continual connection the "Spirit," and "glory," and "heaven" occur.

"The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect."

"According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

"Whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory . . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him . . . The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

* 2 Pet. i. 4. Eph. v. 30.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

[I pray] "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . . . Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. . . . In whom [Christ] ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

[I pray] "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

"It is impossible for those who were once illuminated, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."*

I would have you pay particular attention to this last passage, which, in speaking of those who thwart God's grace, runs through the various characteristics or titles of that glory which they forfeit:—illumination, the heavenly gift, the Holy Ghost, the Divine Word, the powers of the world to come; which all mean the same thing, viewed in different lights, viz. that unspeakable Gospel privilege, which is an earnest and

* 1 Pet. iv. 14; v. 10. 2 Pet. i. 3. Rom. viii. 30. 1 Cor. ii. 7. 9. 14. Eph. i. 3. 17—20; ii. 4—6. 18. 22; iii. 16—19; v. 25—27. Heb. vi. 4—6.

portion of heavenly glory, of the holiness and blessedness of Angels,—a present entrance into the next world, opened upon our souls through participation of the Word Incarnate, ministered to us by the Holy Ghost.

Such is the mysterious state in which Christians stand, if it be right to enlarge upon it. They are in Heaven, in the world of Spirits, and are placed in the way of all manner of invisible influences. “Their conversation is in heaven;” they live among angels, and are within reach (as I may say) of the Saints departed. They are ministers round the throne of their reconciled Father, “kings and priests unto God,” having their robes washed in the Lamb’s blood, and being consecrated as temples of the Holy Ghost. And this being so, we have some insight into the meaning of St. Paul’s anxiety that his brethren should understand “the breadth and length,” “the riches” of the glorious inheritance which they enjoined, and of his forcible declaration, on the other hand, that “the natural man” could not “discern” it.

If we now recur to our Saviour’s words already cited, we shall find that all that the Apostles have told us in their Epistles is but an expansion of two short sentences of His: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into, or (as it is said just before) see the Kingdom of God.” “The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them.”* On these texts I make the following additional remarks:—When Nicodemus doubted about our Lord’s declaration, that a birth through the Spirit was the entrance into His kingdom, He said, “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of man *which is in Heaven*.” In these words our Lord plainly discloses that in some mysterious way He, the Son of man, was really in Heaven, even while, by human eyes, He was seen to be on earth. His discourse seems to run thus:—“Are you offended at the doctrine of the new birth of the soul into the kingdom of God? High as it is, it is but an earthly truth compared with others I, as coming from Heaven, could disclose. It is mysterious how regenerate man should be a citizen of a heavenly kingdom, but I Myself, who speak, am at this moment in Heaven too, even in this My human nature.” Thus the greater Mystery of the Incarnation is made to envelope and pledge to us the mystery of the new birth. As He was in Heaven in an ineffable sense, even “in the days of His flesh,” so are we, in our degree; according to the words of His prayer, that His disciples might “all be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.”†

* John iii. 5; xvii. 22.

† John xvii. 21.

But He was pleased to reveal this high truth more explicitly on a subsequent occasion, I mean in His transfiguration. To many persons this portion of the Sacred History may have appeared without object or meaning. It was, in one sense, a miracle; yet it had no beneficent purpose or lasting consequence, as is usual with our Lord's miracles, and it took place in private. But, surely, it is of a doctrinal nature, being nothing less than a figurative exhibition of the blessed truth contained in the texts under review, a vision of the glorious Kingdom which He set up on the earth on His coming. He said to His Apostles, "I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they *see the kingdom of God*." Then, "after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And his face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. . . . And behold there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory. . . . But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; and, when they were awake, *they saw His glory*."* Such is the Kingdom of God; Christ the centre of it, His glory the light of it, the Just made perfect His companions, and the Apostles His witnesses to their brethren. It realizes what the ancient Saints saw by glimpses,—Jacob at Bethel, Moses in answer to his petition.

Such then being the especial glory and "dreadfulness" which attaches to the Christian Church, it may be asked, how far the gift is also imparted to every individual member of it? It is imparted to every member on his Baptism; as may plainly be inferred from our Lord's words, who in His discourse with Nicodemus, makes a birth through the Spirit, which He also declares is wrought by Baptism, to be the *only* means of entering into His kingdom; so that, unless a man is thus "born of water and of the Spirit," he is in no sense a member of His kingdom at all. By this new birth the Divine Shechinah is set up within him, pervading soul and body, separating him really, not only in name, from those who are not Christians, raising him in the scale of being, drawing and fostering into life whatever remains in him of a higher nature, and imparting to him, in due season and measure, its own surpassing and heavenly virtue. Thus, while he carefully cherishes the Gift, he is, in the words of the text, "changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." On the other hand, if the Gift be resisted, it gradually withdraws its presence, and being thwarted in its chief end, the

* Matt. xvii. 1, &c. Luke ix. 27, &c. Cf. John i. 14. 2 Pet. i. 17.

sanctification of our nature, is forfeited as regards its other benefits also. Such seems to be the rule on which the Almighty Giver acts ; and, could we see the souls of men, doubtless we should see them after this manner : infants just baptized bright as the Cherubim, as flames of fire rising heavenward in sacrifice to God ; then as they pass from childhood to man's estate, the light within them fading or strengthening as the case may be ; while of grown men the multitude, alas ; might show but fearful tokens that the Lord had once been among them, only here and there some scattered witnesses for Christ remaining, and they, too, seamed all over with the scars of sin.

To conclude. It were well if the views I have been setting before you, which in the main are, I trust, those of the Church Catholic from the beginning, were more understood and received among us. They would, under God's blessing, put a stop to much of the enthusiasm which prevails on all sides, while they might tend to dispel those cold and ordinary notions of religion which are the opposite extreme. Till we understand that the gifts of grace are unseen, supernatural, and mysterious, we have but a choice between explaining away the high and glowing expressions of Scripture, or giving them that rash, irreverent, and self-exalting interpretation, which is one of the chief errors of this time. Men of awakened and sensitive minds, knowing from Scripture that the gift of the Holy Ghost is something great and unearthly, dissatisfied with the meagre conceptions of the many, yet not knowing where to look for what they need, are led to place the life of a Christian, which "is hid with Christ in God," in a sort of religious ecstacy, in a high wrought sensibility on sacred subjects, in impassioned thoughts, a soft and languid tone of feeling, and an unnatural profession of all this in conversation. And further, from the same cause, their ignorance of the *supernatural* character of the Heavenly Gift, they attempt to measure it in each other by its sensible effects, and account none to be Christians but those whom they suppose they can ascertain to be such, by their profession, language and carriage. On the other hand, sensible and sober-minded men, offended at such excesses, acquiesce in the notion, that the gift of the Holy Ghost was almost peculiar to the Apostles' day, that now, at least, it does nothing more than make us decent and orderly members of society ; the privileges bestowed upon us in Scripture being, as they conceive, but of an external nature, education and the like, or, at the most, a pardon of our sins and admission to God's favour, unaccompanied by any actual and inherent powers bestowed upon us. Such are the consequences which naturally follow, when from one cause or other, any of those doctrines are obscured, which have been revealed in mercy to our necessities. The mind

catches at the words of life, and tries to apprehend them; and being debarred their true meaning, takes up with this or that form of error, as the case may be, in the semblance of truth, by way of compensation.

For ourselves, in proportion as we realize that higher view of the subject, which we may humbly trust is the true one, let us be careful to act up to it. Let us adore the Sacred Presence within us with all fear, and "rejoice with trembling." Let us offer up our best gifts in sacrifice to Him who, instead of abhorring, has taken up His abode in these sinful hearts of ours. Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, "good works and alms-deeds," a bold and true confession, and a self-denying walk, are the ritual of worship by which we serve Him in His temple. How the distinct and particular works of faith avail to our final acceptance, we know not; neither do we know how they are efficacious in changing our wills and characters, which, through God's grace, they certainly do. All we know is, that as we persevere in them, the inward light grows brighter and brighter, and God manifests Himself in us in a way the world knows not of. In this then consists our whole duty, first to contemplate Almighty God, as in heaven, so in our hearts and souls; and next, while we contemplate Him, to act towards and for Him in the works of every day; to view by faith His glory without and within us, and to acknowledge it by our obedience. Thus we shall unite in one, conceptions the most lofty concerning His majesty and bounty towards us, with the most lowly, minute, and unostentatious service to Him.

Lastly, the doctrine on which I have been dwelling, cannot fail to produce in us deeper and more reverent feelings towards the Church of Christ, as His especial dwelling-place. It is evident, we are in a much more extraordinary state than we are at all aware of. The multitude do not understand this. So it was in Israel once. There was a time when, even at Bethel, where God had already vouchsafed a warning against such ignorance, the very children of the city "mocked" His prophet, little thinking he had with him the mantle of Elijah. In an after age, the prophet Ezekiel was bid prophesy to the people, "whether they would hear or whether they would forbear;" and, it was added, "and they, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them."*

Let us not fear, therefore, to be, in our belief, but a few among many. Let us not fear opposition, suspicion, reproach, or ridicule. God sees us, and His Angels; they are looking on. They know we are right, and bear witness to us: and, "yet a little while, and He that cometh shall come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by *faith*."†

* 2 Kings ii. 23 Ezek. ii. 5—7.

† Heb. x. 37, 38.

SERMON XIX.

REGENERATING BAPTISM.

1 CORINTHIANS xii. 13.

By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body.

As there is One Holy Ghost, so there is one only visible Body of Christians which Almighty God “knows by name,” and one Baptism which admits men into it. This is implied in the text, which is nearly parallel to St. Paul’s words to the Ephesians: “there is one Body, and one Spirit, one Baptism.” But more than this is taught us in it; not only that the Holy Ghost is in the Church, and that Baptism admits into it, but that the Holy Ghost admits by means of Baptism, that the Holy Ghost baptizes; in other words, that each individual member receives the gift of the Holy Ghost as a preliminary step, a condition, or means of his being incorporated into the Church,—or, in our Saviour’s words, that no one can enter, except he be regenerated in order to it.

Now, this is much more than many men are willing to grant, their utmost concession being that the Church has the presence of the Holy Spirit in it, and therefore, to be in the Church is to be in that which has the presence of the Holy Spirit,—that is, to be in the *way* of the Spirit, (so to speak,) which cannot but be a state of favour and privilege; but that the Holy Spirit is given to infants, one by one, on their Baptism, this they will not admit. Yet, one would think words could not be plainer than the text in proof of it; however, they do not admit it.

This defective view of the Sacrament of Baptism, for so I must not shrink from calling it, shall now be considered, and considered in its connection with a popular argument for the Baptism of infants, which, most true as it is in its proper place, yet is scarcely profitable for these times, as seeming to countenance the error in question. I mean, the assumed parallel between Baptism and Circumcision.

It is undeniable that Circumcision in some important respects resembles Baptism, and may allowably, nay, usefully be referred to in illustration of it. Circumcision was the entrance into the Jewish Covenant, and it typified the renunciation of the flesh. In respects such as these it resembles Baptism; and, hence, it has been of service in the argument for Infant Baptism, as having been itself administered to infants. But, though it resembles Baptism in some respects, it is unlike it in others more important. When, then it is found to be the chief and especially approved argument in favour of Infant Baptism among Christians, there is reason for some anxiety, lest this circumstance evince, or introduce insufficient views on the subject of a Christian Sacrament. This remark, I fear, is applicable in the present day.

We baptize infants, in the first place, because the Church has ever done so; and, to say nothing of the duty of observing and transmitting what we have received, in the case of so great a privilege as Baptism, we should be ungrateful and insensible indeed, if we did not give our children the benefit of the usage, even though Scripture said not a word on the subject, so that it said nothing the other way. But, besides, we consider we do find, in our Saviour's words, a command to bring children to Him, for His blessing. Again, He said they were to be members of His Kingdom; also, that Baptism is the only entrance, the new birth into it. We administer then Baptism to children as a sure *benefit* to their souls.

But, when men refuse to admit the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, in the case of infants, then they look about how they may defend Infant Baptism, which, perhaps, from habit, good feeling, or other causes, they do not like to abandon. The ordinary and intelligible reason for the Baptism of infants, is the securing to them remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost,—Regeneration; but if this sacred privilege is not given to them in Baptism, why, it may be asked, should Baptism be administered to them at all? Why not wait till they can understand the meaning of the rite, and can have faith and repentance themselves? Certainly it does seem a very intricate and unreasonable proceeding; first, to lay stress on the necessity of repentance and faith in persons to be baptized, and then to proceed to administer Baptism universally in such a way as to exclude the possibility of their having repentance and faith. I say, this would be strange and inconsistent, were not Baptism, in itself, so direct a blessing that, when parents demand it for their children, all abstract rules must, in very charity, necessarily give way. We administer it whenever we do not discover some actual obstacle in the recipient to hinder its efficacy, as we give medicine to the sick. Otherwise the objection holds; and, accordingly,

clear-sighted men, who deny its regenerating power in the case of infants, often do come to the conclusion, that to administer it to them is a needless and officious act, nay, a profanation of a sacred institution. It seems to them a mockery to baptize them; the waste of an edifying rite, not to say a Sacrament, upon those who cannot understand or use it; and, to speak the truth, they do appear reasonable and straightforward in their inference, granting their premises. It does seem as if those, who deny the regeneration of infants, ought, if they were consistent, (which happily they are not,) to refrain from baptizing them. Surely, if we go by Scripture, the question is decided at once; for no one can deny that there is much more said in Scripture in behalf of the connection between Baptism and Divine grace, than about the duty of Infant Baptism. The passage can scarcely be named, in the New Testament, where Baptism is referred to, without the mention, direct or indirect, of spiritual influences. What right have we to put asunder what God has united? especially since, on the other hand, the text cannot be found which plainly enjoins the Baptism of infants. If the doctrine and the practice are irreconcilable,—Baptismal Regeneration and Infant Baptism,—let the practice, which is not written in Scripture, yield to the doctrine which is; and let us (if we can bear to do so) defraud infants of Baptism, not Baptism of its supernatural virtue. Let us go counter to Tradition rather than to Scripture. This being the difficulty which comes upon those who deny the Regeneration, yet would retain the Baptism, of infants, let us next see how they meet it.

We need not suppose that all I am drawing out passes through the mind of every one who denies that infants are regenerated in Baptism; but, surely, some such processes of thought are implied, which it may be useful to ourselves to trace out. This being understood, I observe that the partly assumed and partly real parallel of Circumcision comes, in fact, whether they know it or not, as a sort of refuge to those who have taken up this intermediate position between Catholic doctrine and heretical practice. They avail themselves of the instance of Circumcision as a proof that a divinely-appointed ordinance need not convey grace, even while it admits into a state of grace; and they argue from the analogy between Circumcision and Baptism, that what was the case with the Mosaic ordinance is the case with the Christian also. Circumcision admitted to certain privileges, to the means of grace, to teaching, and the like; Baptism, they consider, does the same and no more. It has also the same uses as Circumcision, in teaching the necessity of inward sanctification, and implying the original corrupt condition of our nature. In like manner, it ought to be administered to infants, since Circumcision was so administered under the Law.

I do not deny that this view is consistent with itself, and plausible. And it would be perfectly satisfactory, as a view, were it Scriptural. But the plain objection to it is, that Christ and His Apostles do attach a grace to the ordinance of Baptism, such as is not attached in the Old Testament to Circumcision,—which is exactly that difference which makes the latter a mere rite, the former a Sacrament; and if this be so, it is nothing to the purpose to build up an argument on the assumption that the two ordinances are precisely the same.

Surely we have forgotten, in good measure, the difference between Jewish ordinances and Christian. It was said of old time, after St. Paul, "The Law has a shadow, the Gospel an image, Heaven the reality;" or, in other words, that of those heavenly blessings which the Jewish Dispensation prefigured, the Christian imparts a portion or earnest. This, then, is the distinction between our ritual and the Mosaic. The Jewish rites had no substance of blessing in them; they were but outward signs and types of spiritual privileges. They had in them no "grace and truth." When the Divine Antitype came, they were simply and merely in the way; they did but hide from the eye of faith the reality which they had been useful in introducing. They were as the forerunners in a procession, who, after announcing their Prince's coming, must themselves retire, or but crowd his path. Nor these alone, but all mere ceremonies were then for ever unseasonable, as mere obstacles intercepting the Divine light. Yet, while Christ abolished them, considered as means of expiation, or mere badges of profession, or as prophetic types of what was no longer future, He introduced another class of ordinances in their stead; Mysteries, as they are sometimes called, among which are the Sacraments, viz. rites as valueless and powerless in themselves as the Jewish, but being, what the Jewish were not, instruments of the application of His merits to individual believers. Though He now sits on the right hand of God, He has in one sense, never left the world since He first entered it; for, by the ministration of the Holy Ghost, He is really present with us in an unknown way, and ever imparts Himself to those who seek Him. Even when visibly on earth, He, the Son of Man, was still "in heaven;" and now, though He is ascended on high, He is still on earth. And as He is still with us, for all that He is in heaven, so, again, is the hour of His cross and passion ever mystically present, though it be past these eighteen hundred years. Time and space have no portion in the spiritual Kingdom which He has founded; and the rites of His Church are as mysterious spells by which he annuls them. They are not like the Jewish ordinances, long and laborious, expensive or irksome, with aught of value or merit in themselves; they are so simple, so brief, with so little of outward

substance, that the mind is not detained for a moment from Him who works by means of them, but takes them for what they really are, only so far outward as to serve for a medium of the heavenly gift. Thus Christ shines through them, as through transparent bodies, without impediment. He is the Light and Life of the Church, acting through it, dispensing of His fulness, knitting and compacting together every part of it; and these its Mysteries are not mere outward signs, but, (as it were) effluences of His grace developing themselves in external forms, as Angels might do when they appeared to men. He has touched them, and breathed upon them, when He ordained them; and thenceforth they have a virtue in them, which issues forth and encircles them round, till the eye of faith sees in them no element of matter at all. Once for all He hung upon the cross, and blood and water issued from His pierced side, but by the Spirit's ministration, the blood and water are ever flowing, as though His cross were really set up among us, and the baptismal water were but the outward image upon our senses. Thus in a true sense that water is not what it was before, but is gifted with new and spiritual qualities. Not as if its material substance were changed, which our eyes see, or as if any new nature were imparted to it, but that the life-giving Spirit, who could make bread of stones, and sustain animal life on dust and ashes, applies the blood of Christ through it; or according to the doctrine of the text, that He, and not man, is the baptizer.

St. Paul sets this great truth before us, among other places, in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians. First he says, "In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye have fulness in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Here the most solemn and transporting doctrine of the Incarnation is disclosed to us, as the corner stone of the whole Church system; "the Word made flesh," being the divinely appointed Way whereby we are regenerated and saved. The Apostle then proceeds to describe the manner in which this divine fulness is imparted to us, and in so doing contrasts the Jewish ceremony of Circumcision with the spiritual Ordinance which has superseded it. "In whom also," in Christ, "ye are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands," heavenly, supernatural, invisible; when ye strip yourselves of the body of the sins of the flesh, and receive the true circumcision, "the circumcision of Christ, namely, buried with Him in Baptism." Thus Baptism is a spiritual Circumcision. He continues still more plainly. "Let no man *therefore* judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Now, if Baptism were but an outward rite, like Circumcision, how strange a proof would it be of the Gospel's

superseding *all* outward rites, to say that it enforced Baptism! He says, "Ye have Baptism, *therefore* do not think of *shadows*," as if Baptism took the place of shadows, as if it were certainly not a shadow but a substance. Again he says, "but the body is of Christ;" Circumcision is a shadow, but Baptism and the other Mysteries of the Church are "the *body*," and that because they are "of Christ." And lastly he speaks of the duty of "holding to the Head," that is, to Christ, from whom the whole body, being nourished and knit together by joints and bands, increaseth with a godly increase. What are the joints and bands but the Christian Ordinances and Ministrations, as well as those who perform them? but, observe, they are of such a nature as to subserve the "increase" of the Church.

Such is St. Paul's doctrine after Christ had died; St. John the Baptist teaches the same beforehand. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Doubtless there is an allusion here to the special descent of the Spirit at Pentecost; but, even taking it as such, the fulfilment of the Baptist's words then, becomes a pledge to us of the fulfilment of our Saviour's words to Nicodemus to the end of time. He who came by fire at Pentecost, will, as He has said, come by water now. But we may reasonably consider these very words of the Baptist as referring to ordinary Christian Baptism, as well as to the miraculous Baptism of the Apostles. As if he said, "Christ's Baptism shall not be mere water, as mine is. What you see of it indeed is water, but that is but the subordinate element of it; for it is water endued with high and supernatural qualities. Would it not surprise you if water burned like fire? Such, and more than such, is the mystery of that water which He shall pour out on you, having a searching and efficacious influence upon the soul itself."

Now, if any one says that such passages as this *need* not mean all I have supposed, I answer that the question is not what they *must* mean, but what they *do* mean. I am not now engaged in proving, but in explaining the doctrine of Baptism, and in illustrating it from Scripture.

To return:—hence too the Baptismal Font is called "the washing of *regeneration*," not of mere water, "and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He hath poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;" and Christ is said to have "loved the Church and given Himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to Himself a glorious Church."

Further, let us consider the instances of the administration of Baptism in the Acts of the Apostles. If it be as serious a rite as I have represented, surely it must be there set forth as a great thing, and received

with awe and thankfulness. Now we shall find these expectations altogether fulfilled. For instance, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter said to the multitude, who asked what they must do, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Accordingly, "they that gladly received His word were baptized," to obtain these privileges; and, forthwith, we hear of their continuing "in gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." Again, when the Ethiopian Eunuch had been baptized by Philip, he "went on his way rejoicing." After St. Paul had been struck down by the Saviour whom he was persecuting, and sent to Damascus, he began to pray; but though in one sense a changed man already, he had not yet received the gift of regeneration, nor did he receive it except by the ministry of Ananias, who was sent to him from Christ, expressly that he "might be filled with the Holy Ghost." Accordingly Ananias said to him, "And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." So again Cornelius, religious man as he was, and that doubtless by God's secret aid, yet was not received into Christ's family except by Baptism. Even the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him and his friends miraculously, while St. Peter was preaching to them, did not supersede the necessity of the Sacrament. And lastly when the jailor of Philippi had been baptized, he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."*

These and similar passages seem to prove clearly the superiority of Baptism to Circumcision, as being a Sacrament; but if they did not, what conclusion should we have arrived at? no other than this, that Baptism is, like Circumcision, but a carnal ordinance (if the words may be spoken,) not a spiritual possession. See what follows. Do you not recollect how much St. Paul says in depreciation of the rites of the Jewish Law, on the ground of their being rudiments of this world, cardinal ordinances? Now if Baptism be altogether like Circumcision, can it, any more than they, have a place in the New Covenant? This was the very defect of the Mosaic Law, that it was but a form; this was one part of the bondage of the Jews, that they were put under forms, which contained in them no direct or intrinsic virtue, but had their spiritual use only as obeying for conscience' sake, and as means of prophetic instruction. Surely this cannot be our state under the Gospel: "We," says St. Paul, "when we were children," that is, Jews, "were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time

*Acts ii. 38—17; viii. 39; ix. 17; xxii. 16; x. 44—48; xvi. 31.

was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." Is it possible then, now that the Spirit is come, we can be under dead rights and ordinances? It is plainly impossible. If Baptism then has no spiritual virtue in it, can it be intended for us Christians? If it has no regenerating power, surely they only are consistent who reject it altogether. I will boldly say it, we have nothing dead and earthly under the Gospel, and we act like the Judaizing Christians of old time if we submit to any thing such; therefore they only are consistent, who, denying the virtue of Baptism, also deny its authority as a permanent ordinance of the Gospel. Surely it was but intended for the infancy of the Church, ere men were weaned from their attachment to a ritual! Surely it was but an oriental custom, edifying to those who loved a symbolical worship, but needless, nay harmful to us; harmful as impeding the prerogative of Christian liberty, obscuring our view of the one Christian Atonement, corrupting the simplicity of our faith and trust, and profaning the dispensation of the Spirit! I repeat it, either Baptism is an instrument of the Holy Ghost, or it has no place in Christianity. We indeed, who, in accordance with the teaching of the Church Universal, believe that it is an act of the Spirit, are under no difficulty in this matter. But let those who deny it look to themselves. They are on their own principles committing the sin of the Galatians, and severing themselves from Christ. Surely if their doctrine be right, they may consider themselves addressed by St. Paul in his language to those early Judaizers, "O senseless Galatians," he would have said to them, "who hath bewitched you? Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Why burden yourselves with mere ceremonies external washings, the rudiments of the world, shadows of good things, weak, beggarly and unprofitable elements, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage? Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage. Spiritual men are delivered from formal observances. If ye be baptized, Christ shall profit you nothing; for neither Baptism availeth any thing nor want of Baptism, but faith which worketh by love. Neither Baptism availeth any thing nor want of Baptism, but a new creature; and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of our God."

Such, doubtless, is the only consistent mode of regarding and treating this sacred ordinance, if it has no power or grace in it above a Jewish rite. We should discard it. And in whatever degree we think it thus unprofitable, so far we should discard it. If we think it but a

figure in the case of children, though a Sacrament to grown men, we should keep from wasting upon children what would benefit them as men. And this holds good of all the ordinances of the Church; so far as they are but outward forms, let them be abolished as parts of dead Judaism. But, praised be God! they are none of them such. They all have life. Christ has lodged virtue in His Church, and she dispenses it forth from her in all her words and works. Why will you not believe this? What do you gain by so jealous and niggardly a spirit, such "slowness of heart," but the loss of thoughts full of comfort and of majesty? To view Christ as all but visibly revealed,—to look upon His ordinances, not in themselves but as signs of His presence and power, as the accents of His love, the very form and countenance of Him who ever beholds us, ever cherishes us,—to see Him thus revealed in glory day by day,—is not this to those who believe it an unspeakable privilege? Is it not so great that a man might well wish it true from the excellence of it, and count them happy who are able to receive it? And when this is all plainly revealed in Scripture, when we are expressly told that Christ washes us by Water to change us into a glorious Church, that the consecrated bread is His flesh, that He is present with His ministers and is in the midst of His Church why should we draw back, like Thomas doubting of our Lord's resurrection? "Blessed are they that have not seen and have yet believed!" Surely so it is; and however the world may scorn our faith, however those despise us from whom we might expect better things, we will cheerfully bear what is a slight drawback indeed on our extreme blessedness. While they accuse us of trusting in ourselves, trusting in our forms, and of ignorance of the Gospel, we will meekly say in our hearts, "'Thou, God, seest me:' Thou knowest that we desire to love nothing but Thee, and to trust in nothing but the cross of Christ; and that we relinquish all self-reliance, and know ourselves in ourselves to have nothing but sin and misery, and esteem these ordinances of Thine not for their own sake, but as memorials of Thee and of Thy Son,—memorials which He has appointed, which He has blessed, and in which, by faith, we see Him manifested day by day, and through which we hope to receive the imputation of those merits, once for all wrought out on the Cross, and our only effectual help in the day of account."

SERMON XX.

INFANT BAPTISM.

MATT. xviii. 5.

Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.

PERHAPS there are no words uttered by our Lord in the Gospels more gracious and considerate, as well as holy, just, and good (that is, if we dare measure His words by our own sense of them,) than the encouragement given in this text, and others of a similar character; none, more gracious and considerate, taking into account our nature and the necessary consequence of believing the doctrines He has brought to light. He has brought to light life and immortality; but with immortal life, He has also brought to light eternal death; He has revealed the awful truth, that the soul never dies, never ceases to think and to be conscious, to be capable of happiness or misery; that when once a man is born into the world, neither time nor place, friend nor enemy, Angels nor devils can touch the living principle within him; not even himself has any power over himself; but, as he has begun, so he must continue to exist on to eternity. He has taught us, that every child, from the moment of his birth, has this prospect before him, also, that far from being sure of heaven, he is to be put on a trial, whether he will serve God or no; nay, not only on a trial, but on a trial not on even terms; not a trial to which he is equal, but with a strong propensity within him to the worst alternative, a tendency weighing him down to earth; so that of himself he cannot serve God acceptably, or even repent of his unworthy service.

I say, if we knew only this, no thoughtful person could ever, without the greatest humiliation and terror, reflect on his being responsible for the existence of being exposed to such miserable disadvantages. Surely, if we only knew the primary doctrines of the Gospel, viz. that man is a sinner by nature, and, though redeemed by Christ, cannot turn to Christ of his own strength, I say, the cruelty of giving birth to poor infants, who should inherit our nature and receive from us the

birth-right of corruption, would be so great, that bowing the head to God's appointment, and believing it to be good and true, we could but conclude with the Apostles on one occasion, that "it were good not to marry." Our knowledge of the real condition of man in God's sight would surely lead to the breaking up of society, in proportion as it was sincerely and simply received; for what good were it to know that Christ has died for us, if we also knew that no one is by nature able to repent and believe, and knew nothing more? It would lead thoughtful men to think of their own personal salvation only, and thus to defraud Christ of the succession of believers, and the perpetual family of Saints, which is to be the salt of the earth to the end of time and the full fruit of His passion.

It is true, there is another doctrine besides those which I have stated, viz. that Christ has not only died for sinners, but also vouchsafes from above the influences of grace, to enable them to love what by nature they cannot love, and to do what they cannot do, to believe and obey. But even this would not be enough to remove the alarm and distress of the Christian parent. For, though God mercifully gives His grace to enable men to believe in His Son, yet it is as certain as the truth of Scripture itself, that He does not give His grace to *all*, but to those to whom He will. If any word of Scripture be true, it is this,—that there is an election, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," that some men are brought near unto God, and gifted with His regenerating grace, and others not; so that, although we knew ever so much concerning the gift of the Holy Ghost, as well as concerning the meritorious death of Christ, yet, that knowledge would not tend a whit more to reconcile religious men to what they must certainly consider the cruelty, and the personal responsibility, of becoming a parent.

I would say, then, that if this were all we knew on the subject, no one of any seriousness could bear the thought of adding to this world's "children of wrath," except an express divine command obliged him to do so. If even a single deliberate act of sin be (as it is) a great and fearful matter, mortal and damnable, yet what is any sin, say blasphemy, murder, idolatry, even the greatest, what would it be to the giving being to a soul intelligent, individual, accountable, fraught with all the sensibilities and affections which belong to human nature, capable of pain, immortal, and in due season manifesting a will incurably corrupt, and a heart at enmity with God, even though there were the chance that possibly it might be one of those who were elected for eternal life? There can be no doubt, that if we know no more of the Gospel than I have hitherto mentioned, if we content ourselves with that half

Gospel which is sometimes taken for the whole, none would be so selfish and so unfeeling as we, who could be content, for the sake of worldly comforts, a cheerful home, and the like, to surround ourselves with those, about whom, dearly as we loved them, and fervently as we might pray for them, we only knew thus much, that there was a chance,—a chance of some sort that, perhaps they might be in the number of the few whom Christ rescues from the curse of original sin.

Let us now see how His gracious words, contained in the text, remove the difficulty.

In truth, our Merciful Saviour has done much more for us than reveal the wonderful doctrines of the Gospel; He has enabled us to apprehend them. He has given us directions as well as doctrines, and while giving them has imparted to us especial encouragement and comfort. What an inactive, useless world this would be, if the sun's light did not diffuse itself through the air and fall on all objects around us, enabling us to see earth and sky as well as the sun itself! Cannot we conceive nature so constituted that the sun appeared as a bright spot in the heavens, while the heavens themselves were black as in the starlight, and the earth dark as night? Such would have been our religious state, had not our Lord applied, and diversified, and poured to and fro, in heat and light, those heavenly glories which are concentrated in Him. He would shine upon us from above in all His high attributes and offices, as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His elect; but how should we bring home His grace to ourselves? How indeed should we gain, and know we gain, an answer to our prayers,—how secure the comfortable assurance that He loves us personally, and will change our hearts, which we feel to be so earthly, and wash away our sins, which we confess to be so manifold, unless He had given us Sacraments,—means and pledges of grace,—keys which open the treasure-house of mercy,—ordinances in which we not only ask, but receive, and know we receive, all we can receive as accountable beings, (not, indeed, the certainty of heaven, for we are still in the flesh,) but the certainty of God's present favour, the certainty that He is reconciled to us, will work in us and with us all righteousness, will so supply our need, that henceforth we shall lack nothing for the completion and overflowing sanctification of our defective and sinful nature, but have all, and more than all that Adam ever had in his first purity, all that the highest Archangel or Seraph ever had when on his trial, whether he would stand or fall?

For instance, in the particular case I have been considering, our gracious Lord has done much more than tell us some souls are elected to the mercies of redemption and others not. He has not left Christians thus uncertain about their children. He has expressly assured us

that children are in the number of His chosen ; and, if you ask whether all children, I reply, all children that you can bring to Baptism, all children who are within reach of it. So literally has He fulfilled His promise : “ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat ; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price !” and again, “ All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” He has disclosed His secret election in a visible Sacrament, and thus enables Christians to bear to be, what otherwise they would necessarily shrink from being parents. He relieves, my brethren, your anxious minds, anxious (as they must ever be) for your children’s welfare, even after all the good promises of the gospel, but unspeakably anxious before you understand *how* you are to be rid of the extreme responsibility of bestowing an eternal being upon sinful creatures whom you cannot change. With the tenderest feeling He removes your difficulty. He bids you bring them to Him from the first, and then take and educate them in His name. Like Pharaoh’s daughter, He takes them up when you, their natural kin, have been forced to abandon them to inevitable death ; and then He gives them back to you to nurse for His sake. “ Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.”* Again in the text, “ Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me.” Observe how He speaks, as if He would give you some great and urgent encouragement ; not only does He give permission, but He promises a reward to those who dedicate children to Him. He not only bids us do the very thing we wish to do, but bestows on the doing it a second blessing. He promises that if we bring children to Him for His blessing, He will bless us for bringing them ; if we receive them for His sake, He will make it as if we received Himself, which is the greatest reward He could give us. Thus, while we are engaged in this work of receiving children in His name, let us recollect, to our great comfort, that we are about no earthly toil ; we are taking part in a joyful solemnity, in a blessed and holy ordinance, in which our Saviour Christ not only comes to them, but is spiritually received into our own souls.

These reflections arise on the first view of the subject. However it may be objected, that after all, numbers fall away from God, even with the advantages of Baptism, and if so, the birth of children is not a less awful subject of contemplation now than before, nay, rather more so, inasmuch as a heavier doom awaits those who sin after grace given, than those who have not received it.

* Mark x. 14.

But this objection surely brings us to a very different question. What I have been saying comes to this :—that a child seems by its very nature, which is corrupt and ungodly, to complain of those parents who gave it him ; I mean, seems to do so in the parents' estimation, when they think of him. Their tender love towards him is humbled and distressed by this thought : "This dear and helpless object of our affection is a sinner through his parents, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, born a child of wrath. Now, I conceive this dreadful thought is at once removed, directly it is known that they who gave him his natural being may also bring him to a second birth, in which original sin is washed away, and such influences of grace given and promised as make it a child's own fault, if he, in the event, fails of receiving an eternal inheritance of blessedness in God's presence. They undo their own original injury. Now that Christ receives us in our infancy, no one has any ground for complaining of his fallen nature. He receives by birth a curse, but by Baptism a blessing, and the blessing is the greater ; and to murmur now against his condition is all one with murmuring against his being created at all, his being created as a responsible being, which is a murmuring, not against man but against God ; for though it was man who has made our nature inclined to evil, yet, that we are beings on a trial, with moral natures, a power to do right or wrong, and a capacity of happiness or misery, is not man's work, but the Creator's. Thus parents being allowed to bestow a second birth upon their offspring, henceforth do but share and are sheltered in His responsibility, (if I may dare so speak,) who is ever "justified in His sayings, and overcomes when He is judged."

However, it may be asked, how this applies to the case of the heathen ? They cannot bring their children to Baptism, therefore they do incur the responsibility of giving being to souls who live and die in the wrath of God. I answer, that a man cannot be responsible for that about which he is altogether ignorant. The heathen have no knowledge of the real state of mankind, and therefore they can have none of the duties which arise out of that knowledge. None of us, not even Christians, know fully our own condition, and the consequences of our actions ; else, doubtless, we should be too much overpowered to act at all. Did we see the complete consequences of any one sin, did we see how it spread by the contagion of example and influence through the world, how many souls it injured, and what its eternal effects were, doubtless we should become speechless and motionless, as though we saw the flames of hell fire. Enough light is given us to direct us, and to make us responsible beings, not so much as to overwhelm us. We are not told the secret of our guilty nature, till we are told the means

to escape from it ; we are not told of God's fearful wrath till we are told of His love in Christ. The heathen do not know of Baptism, but they do not know of original sin ; for God would allot fear, faith, and hope to all men, despair to none. Again the heathen know nothing of the eternity of future punishment, yet our Lord, in His account of the judgment, when "*all nations*" shall be gathered before Him, does not except them from the risk of it. They know neither of eternal death nor eternal life. Let us leave the case of the heathen, about which nothing has been revealed to us ; they are in the hand of God, the righteous and merciful God ; "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right."*

But further, it may be objected that though Baptism is vouchsafed to the children of Christian parents, yet we are expressly assured that the few, not the many, shall be saved ; so that the gift, however great, does not remove the difficulty in our way or make it less of a risk to bring into existence those who are more likely to be among the wretched many than the blessed few. But, surely, this is a misconception of our Saviour's words. Where does He say that only few of the children of *His sincere followers* shall be saved ? He says, indeed, that there will be but few out of the whole multitude of the regenerate ; and the greater number of them, as we know too well, are disobedient to their calling. No wonder if their children turn out like themselves, and live to this world. But, because the mass of men abuse their privileges, which we see they do, and because we dare not entertain any sanguine hopes of the children of careless parents, how does this prove that those who do live in God's faith and fear, and are labouring and tending to be in the number of the elect few, may not cherish the confidence that their children, in like manner will in due season obey God's calling, yield to His Holy Spirit, "be made like the image of His Only-begotten Son, walk religiously in good works," and at length attain to everlasting glory ? Solomon, even under the Law, assures us that, if a child be trained up in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it."† Much more (please God) will this be true, where the parents' prayers and the children's training are preceded by the grant of so great and present a benefit as regenerating Baptism ; much more, when His Son has so graciously made the little children patterns to grown men, declaring that then, and then only, we become true members of His Kingdom when we become like them, and when, in sign of His favour, "He took them up in his arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Let a man consider how much is contained in the declaration, that God "hath not appointed us unto

* Gen. xviii. 25.

† Prov. xxii. 6.

wrath, but to obtain salvation ;”* and he will feel that he may safely trust his children to their Lord and Saviour,—reluctance being no longer a serious prudence, but an unbelieving and unthankful jealousy, and the care of them no burdensome nor sorrowful toil, though an anxious one, but a labour of love, a joyful service done to Christ.

Lastly, it may still be asked what encouragement after all has been gained through Christian Baptism, which we should not have had without it, since it seems the children’s hopes are to be ultimately rested not on the Sacrament administered, but on the parents’ faith and prayers and careful training of them. These means, it may be objected, might and would have been used by religious men, even though they had known only of Christ’s merits and gifts without direction how to convey and apply them to individuals ; they would have prayed and been careful then, and so gained grace for their children, and they can do no more now. But can you indeed thus argue? What ! is there no difference between asking and receiving? for prayer is an asking and Baptism is a receiving. Is there no difference between a chance and a certainty? How many infants die in their childhood ! is it no difference to know that a child has gone to heaven, or that he has died as he was born? But supposing a child lives, is not regeneration a real gain? does not it renew our nature, exalt us in the scale of being, give us additional powers, open upon us untold blessings, and moreover brighten in an extreme degree the prospect of our salvation, if religious training follows? I will say more. Many men die without any signs of confirmed holiness, or formed character one way or the other. We know, indeed, that privileges not improved will save no one ; but we do not know, we cannot pronounce, whether in souls where there is but a little strength, yet much conflict, and much repentance, their regeneration may not, as in the case with children, avail them hereafter in some secret manner which, with our present knowledge, we cannot speak about or imagine. Surely it is not a slight benefit to have been “made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come.”†

Now I trust that these considerations may suffice, through God’s grace, to open on you a more serious view of the subject treated of, than is often taken even by those who are not without religious thoughts upon it. I fear indeed that most men, though they profess and have a regard for religion, yet have very low and contracted notions of the dignity of their station as *Christians*. To be a Christian is one of the most wondrous and awful gifts in the world. It is, in one sense, to be

* 1 Thess. v. 9.

† Heb. vi. 4, 5.

higher than Angel or Archangel. If we have any portion of an enlightened faith, we shall understand that our state, as members of Christ's Church, is full of mystery. What so mysterious as to be born, as we are, under God's wrath? What so mysterious as to be redeemed by the death of the Son of God made flesh? What so mysterious as to receive the virtue of that death one by one through Sacraments? What so mysterious as to be able to teach and train each other in good or evil? When a man at all enters into such thoughts, how is his view changed about the birth of children! in what a different light do his duties, as a parent, break upon him! The notion entertained by most men seems to be, that it is a pleasant thing to have a home;—this is what would be called an innocent and praiseworthy reason for marrying;—that a wife and family are comforts. And the highest view a number of persons take is, that it is decent and respectable to be a married man; that it gives a man a station in society, and settles him. All this is true. Doubtless wife and children *are* blessings from God: and it *is* praiseworthy and right to be domestic, and to live in orderly and honourable habits. But a man who limits his view to these thoughts, who does not look at marriage and at the birth of children, as something of a much higher and more heavenly nature than any thing we see, who does not discern in Holy matrimony a divine ordinance, shadowing out the union between Christ and the Church, and does not associate the birth of children with the Ordinance of their new birth, such a one, I can only say, has very carnal views.

It is well to go on labouring, year after year, for the bread that perisheth; and, if we are well off in the world, to take interest and pleasure in our families rather than to seek amusements out of doors; it is very well, but it is not religion; and let us endeavour to make our feelings towards them more and more religious. Let us beware of aiming at nothing higher than their being educated well for this world, their forming respectable connexions, succeeding in their callings, and settling well. Let us never think we have absolved ourselves from the responsibility of being their parents, till we have brought them to Christ, as in Baptism, so by religious training. Let us bear in mind ever to pray for their eternal salvation; let us “watch for their souls as those who must give account.” Let us remember that salvation does not come as a matter of course; that Baptism, though administered to them once and long since, is never past, always lives in them as a blessing or as a burden: and that though we may cherish a joyful confidence that “He who hath begun a good work in them will perform it,” then only have we a right to cherish it, when we are doing our part towards fulfilling it.

SERMON XXI.

THE DAILY SERVICE.

HEB. x. 25.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another ; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

THE first Christians set up the Church in continual prayer. "They persevering daily with one mind in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did share their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God."* St. Paul in his epistles binds their example upon their successors for ever. Indeed we could not have conceived, even if he and the other Apostles had been silent, that such a solemn opening of the Gospel, as that contained in the book of Acts, was only of a temporary nature, and not rather a specimen of what was to take place among the elect people in every age, and a shadow of that perfect service which will be their blessedness in heaven. However, St. Paul removes all doubt on this subject by expressly enjoining this united and unceasing prayer in various passages of his epistles : as for instance, "I will . . . that men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands."† "Persevere in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving ;"‡ and in the text.

But it will be said, "Times are altered ; the rites and observances of the Church are local and occasional ; what was a duty then, need not be a duty now, even though St. Paul happens to enjoin it on those whom he addresses. Such continual prayer was the particular form which the religion of the early Christians took, and ours has taken another form." Do not suppose, because I allow myself thus to word the objection, that I therefore, for an instant, allow that continual united prayer may religiously be considered a mere usage or fashion ; but so it is treated,—so, perhaps, some of us in our secret hearts have at times been tempted to imagine : that is, we have been disposed to think that

* Acts. ii. 46, 47.

† 1 Tim. ii. 8.

‡ Col. iv. 2.

public worship at intervals of a week has in it something of natural fitness and reasonableness which continual week-day worship has not. Still, supposing it,—granting daily worship to be a ceremony, or an usage, and Sunday worship not to be, calling it by any title the most slighting and disparaging,—the question returns, was this ceremony or usage of continual united prayer intended by the Apostles, for every age of the Church, or only for the early Christians? A precept may be but positive, not moral, and yet of perpetual obligation. Now, I answer confidently that united prayer, unceasing prayer, is enjoined by St. Paul, in a passage just cited from an epistle which lays down rules for the government and due order of the Church to the end of time. More plausibly even might we desecrate Sunday, which he does not mention in it, than neglect continual prayer, which he does. Observe how explicitly he speaks, “I will therefore that men pray in *every place* ;” not only at Jerusalem, not only at Corinth, not only in Rome, but even in England; in England at this day, in our secluded villages, in our rich populous busy towns, whatever be the importance of those secular objects which absorb our thoughts and time.

Or, again, take the text, and consider whether it favours the notion of a change or relaxation of the primitive custom. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so *much the more*, as ye see the Day approaching.” The increasing troubles of the world, the fury of Satan, and the madness of the people, the dismay of sun, moon, and stars, distress of nations with perplexity, men’s hearts failing them for fear, the sea and the waves roaring, all these gathering tokens of God’s wrath are but calls upon us for greater perseverance in united prayer. Let those men especially consider this, who say that we are but dreaming of centuries gone by, missing our mark and born out of time, when we insist on such duties and practices as are now merely out of fashion; those who point to the tumult and fever which agitates the whole nation, and say we must be busy and troubled too, in order to respond to it; who say that the tide of events has set in one way, and that we must give into it, if we would be practical men; that it is idleness to attempt to stem a current, which it will be a great thing even to direct; that since the present age loves conversing and hearing about religion, and does not like silent thought, patient waiting, recurring prayers, severe exercises, that therefore we must obey it, and, dismissing rites and ordinances, convert the Gospel into a rational faith, so called, and a religion of the heart; let these men seriously consider St. Paul’s exhortation, that we are to persevere in prayer,—and that in every place,—and the more, the more

troubled and perplexed the affairs of this world become; not indeed omitting active exertions, but not, on that account, omitting prayer.

I have spoken of St. Paul, but, consider how this rule of "continuing in prayer" is exemplified in St. Peter's history also. He had learned from his Saviour's pattern not to think prayer a loss of time. Christ had taken Him up with Him into the holy mount, though multitudes waited to be healed and taught below. Again, before His passion, He had taken him into the garden of Gethsemane; and while He prayed Himself, He called upon Him likewise to "watch and pray lest he entered into temptation." In consequence, St. Peter warns us in his first Epistle, as St. Paul in the text, "The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."* And in one memorable passage of his history he received a revelation of a momentous and most gracious truth when he was at his prayers. Who would not have said that he was wasting his time, when he retired to the house of Simon at Joppa, for many days, and went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour? Was that, it might be asked, the part of an Apostle, whose commission was to preach the Gospel? Was he thus burying his light, instead of meeting the exigencies of the time? Yet, there God met him, and put a word in his mouth. There he learned the comfortable truth, that the Gentiles were no longer common or unclean, but admissible into the Covenant of Grace. And if continual prayer was the employment of an Apostle, much more was it observed by those Christians who were less prominently called to labour. Accordingly, when St. Peter was in prison, prayers were offered for him, "without ceasing," by the Church; and to those prayers he was granted. When miraculously released, and arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, he found "many gathered together praying."†

Stated and continual prayer, then, and especially united prayer, is plainly the duty of Christians. And if we ask how often we are to pray, I reply, that we ought to consider prayer as a plain privilege, directly we know that it is a duty, and therefore that the question is out of place. Surely, when we know we may approach the Mercy-seat, the only further question is, whether there be any thing to forbid us coming often, any thing implying that such frequent coming is presumptuous and irreverent. So great a mercy is it to be permitted to come, that a humble mind may well ask, "is it a profane intrusion to come when I will?" If it be not, such a one will rejoice to come continually. Now, by way of removing these fears, Scripture contains most condescending intima-

* 1 Pet. iv. 7.

† Acts xii. 12.

tions that we may come at all times. For instance, in the Lord's Prayer petition is made for *daily* bread for *this* day ; therefore, our Saviour intended it should be used daily. Further, it is said, "give us," "forgive us ;" therefore it may fairly be presumed to be given us as a social prayer. Thus in the Lord's Prayer itself there seems to be sanction for daily united prayer. Again, if we consider His words in the parable, twice a day at least seems permitted us, "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him,"* though this is to take the words according to a very restricted interpretation. And since Daniel prayed three times a day, and the Psalmist even seven, under the Law, we may infer, that Christians, certainly, are not irreverent, nor incur the blame of using vain repetitions, though they join in many Services.

Now I do not see what can be said in answer to these arguments, imperfect as they are, compared with the whole proof that might be adduced, except that some of the texts cited may, perhaps, refer to mere secret prayer almost without words, and some speak primarily of private prayer. Yet it is undeniable, on the other hand, that united prayer, not private or secret, is principally intended in those passages of the New Testament, which speak of prayer at all ; and, if so, the remainder may be left to apply indirectly or not, as we chance to decide, without interfering with a conclusion otherwise proved. If, however, it be said, that family prayer is a fulfilment of the duty, without prayer in Church, I reply, that I am not at all speaking of it as a duty, but as a privilege ; I do not tell men that they must come to Church, so much as declare the glad tidings that they may. This surely is enough for those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and humbly desire to see the face of God.

Now, I will say a few words on the manner in which the early Christians fulfilled this duty.

Quite at first, when the persecutions raged, they assembled when and where they could. At times they could but avail themselves of Christ's promise, that if two of His disciples "*agree on earth*, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of their Heavenly Father ;" though, by small parties, and in towns, they seem to have met together continually from the first. Gradually, as they grew stronger, or as they happened to be tolerated, they made full proof of their sacred privilege, and showed what was the desire of their hearts.

Their most solemn Service took place on the Lord's day, as might be expected, when the Holy Eucharist was celebrated.† Next to Sunday came Wednesday and Friday, when, also, assemblies for worship

* Luke xviii. 7.

† Bingham's *Antiq.* xiii. 9.

continued till three o'clock in the afternoon, and were observed with fasting ; in some places with the Eucharist also. Saturday too was observed in certain branches of the Church with especial devotion, the Holy Mysteries being solemnized and other Services performed as on the Lord's day.

Next must be mentioned, the Festivals of the Martyrs, when, in addition to the sacred Services used on the Lord's day, there was read some account of the particular Martyr commemorated, with exhortations to follow his pattern.

These holy days, whether Sunday or Saint's day, were commonly ushered in by a Vigil or religious watching, as you find it noted down in the calendar at the beginning of the Prayer Book. These lasted through the night.

Moreover, there were the sacred Seasons ; such as the forty days of Lent for fasting, and the fifty days between Easter and Whitsuntide for rejoicing.

Such was the course of special devotions in the early Church ; but, besides, every day had its ordinary Services, viz. prayer morning and evening.

Besides these, might be mentioned the prayers at the canonical hours, which were originally used for private, but, at length, for united worship ; viz. at the third hour, or nine in the morning, in commemoration of the Holy Ghost's descent at Pentecost at that hour ; at the sixth, the time of St. Peter's vision at Joppa, in memory of our Saviour's crucifixion ; and at the ninth, in memory of His death, which was the hour when St. Peter and St. John went up to the Temple and healed the lame man. It may be added, that in some places the Holy Eucharist was celebrated and partaken daily.

This is by no means a full enumeration of the sacred Services in the early Church ; but it is abundantly sufficient for my purpose, which is to show how highly they valued the privilege of united prayer, and how literally they understood the words of Christ and His Apostles. I am by no means contending, that every point of discipline and order in this day must be precisely the same as it was then. Christians then had more time on their hands than many of us have ; and certain peculiarities of the age and place might combine to allow them to do what we cannot do. Still, so far must be clear to every candid person who considers the state of the case, that they found some sort of pleasure in prayer which we do not ; that they took delight in an exercise, which (I am afraid I must say, though it seems profane even to say it) which we should consider painfully long and tedious.

This too is worth observing of the primitive Christians, that they

united social and private prayer in their Service. On holydays, for instance, when it was extended till three o'clock in the afternoon, they commenced with singing the Psalms, in the midst of which two Lessons were read, as is usual with us, commonly one from the Old and one from the New Testament. But, in some places, instead of these Lessons, after every Psalm, a short space was allowed for private prayer to be made in silence, much in the way we say a short prayer on coming into, and going out of Church. After the Psalms and Lessons came the Sermon, the more solemn prayers having not yet begun. Shortly after, followed the celebration of the Holy Communion, which again was introduced by a time of silence for private prayer, such as we at this day are allowed during the administration of the Sacred Elements to other communicants.

And in this way they lengthened out and varied their Services; principally, that is, by means of private prayers and psalms: so that, when no regular course of service was proceeding, yet the Church might be full of people, praying in secret and confessing their sins, or singing together psalms or hymns. Thus exactly did they fulfil the Scripture precepts,—“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray; is any merry? let him sing psalms,” and “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” *

I have now said enough to let you into the reasons why I lately began Daily Service in this Church. I felt that we were very unlike the early Christians, if we went on without it; and that it was my business to give you an opportunity of observing it, else I was keeping a privilege from you. If you ask, why I did not commence it before, I will rather tell you why I began just at this time. It was, that the state of public affairs was so threatening that I could not bear to wait longer; for there seemed quite a call upon all Christians to be earnest in prayer, so much the more, as they seemed to see the Day of vengeance approaching. Under these circumstances it seemed wrong to withhold from you a privilege, for as a privilege I would entirely consider it. I wish to view it rather as a privilege than as a duty, because then all those perplexed questions are removed at once, which otherwise beset the mind, whether a man should come or not. Considering it in the light of a privilege, I am not obliged to blame a man for not coming. I say to him, If you cannot come, then you have a great loss. Very likely you are right in not coming; you have duties connected with your temporal calling

* James v. 13. C 1. iii. 16.

which have a claim on you ; you must serve like Martha, you have not the leisure of Mary. Well, be it so ; still you have a loss, as Martha had while Mary was at Jesus' feet. You have a loss ; I do not say God cannot make it up to you ; doubtless He will bless every one who continues in the path of duty. He blessed Peter in prison, and Paul on the sea, as well as the mother of Mark, or the daughters of Philip. Doubtless, even in your usual employments you can be glorifying your Saviour ; you can be thinking of Him ; you can be thinking of those who are met together in worship ; you can be following in your heart, as far as may be, the prayers they offer. Doubtless : only try to realize to yourself that continual prayer and praise *is* a privilege ; only feel in good earnest, what somehow the mass of Christians, after all, do not receive, that " it is good to be here,"—feel as the early Christians felt when persecution hindered them from meeting, or, as holy David, when he cried out, " My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the Living God ; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God ?" * feel this, and I shall not be solicitous about your coming ; you will come if you can.

With these thoughts in my mind, I determined to offer to God the Daily Service here myself, in order that all might have the opportunity of coming before Him, who would come ; to offer it, not waiting for a congregation, but independently of all men, as our Church sanctions ; to set the example, and to save you the need of waiting for one another ; and at least to give myself, with the early Christians, and St. Peter on the house-top, the benefit, if not of social, at least of private prayer, as becomes the Christian priesthood. It is quite plain that far the greater part of our Daily Service, though more fitted for a congregation than for an individual, (as indeed is the Lord's prayer itself,) may yet be used, as the Lord's Prayer is used, by even one person. Such is our Common Prayer viewed in itself, and our Church has in the introduction to it expressly directed this use of it. It is there said, " All priests and deacons are to say daily the morning and evening prayer, either privately or openly, not being let by sickness, or some other urgent cause." Again, " the curate that ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the parish church or chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that people may come to hear God's word and to pray with him." Now, doubtless, there are many reasons which may render the strict observance of these rules inexpedient in this or that place or time. The very disuse of them will be a reason for reviving them very cautiously and

* Ps. xlii. 2.

gradually ; the paucity of clergy is another reason for suspending them. Still there they remain in the Prayer Book,—obsolete they cannot become, nay, even though torn from the book in some day of rebuke (to suppose what should hardly even be supposed), they still would have power and live unto God. If prayers were right three centuries since, they are right now. If a Christian Minister might suitably offer up common prayer by himself then, surely he may do so now. If he was then the spokesman of the saints far and near, gathering together their holy and concordant suffrages, and presenting them by virtue of his priesthood, he is so now. The revival of this usage is merely a matter of place and time ; and though neither our Lord nor His Church would have us make sudden alterations, even though for the better, yet certainly we ought never to forget what is abstractedly our duty, what is in itself best, what it is we have to aim at and labour towards. If authority were needed, besides our Church's own, for the propriety of Christian Ministers praying even by themselves in places of worship, we have it in the life of our great pattern of Christian faith and wisdom, Hooker. "To what he persuaded others," says his biographer, "he added his own example of fasting and prayer ; and did usually every Ember week take from the parish clerk the key of the church-door, into which place he retired every day, and locked himself up for many hours ; and did the like most Fridays, and other days of fasting."

That holy man, in this instance, kept his prayers to himself. He was not offering up the Daily Service ; but I adduce his instance to show that there is nothing strange or unseemly in a Christian Minister praying in Church by himself ; and if so, much less when he gives his people the opportunity of coming if they will. *This*, then, is what I felt and feel :—it is commonly said, when week-day prayers are spoken of, "you will not get a congregation, or you will get but a few ;" but they whom Christ has brought near to Himself to be the Stewards of His Mysteries depend on no man ; rather, after His pattern, they are to draw men after them. He prayed alone on the mountain ; He prays alone (for who shall join with Him ?) in His Father's presence. He is the one effectual Intercessor for sinners at the right hand of God. And what He is really, such are we in figure ; what He is meritoriously, such are we instrumentally. Such are we by His grace ; allowed to occupy His place visibly, however unworthily, in His absence, till He come ; allowed to depend on Him, and not on our people ; allowed to draw our commission from Him, not from them ; allowed to be a centre, about which the Church may grow, and about which it really exists, be it great or little.

Therefore, in beginning and continuing the Daily Service, I do not,

will not measure the effect produced, by appearances. If we wait till all the world are worshippers, we must wait till the world is new made ; but, if so, who shall draw the line, and say, how many are enough to pray together, when He has told us that His flock is little, and that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them ? So I account a few met together in prayer to be a type of His true Church ; not actually His true Church, (God forbid the presumption !) but as a token and type of it ;—not *as* His elect, one by one, for who can know whom He has chosen but He who chooses ?—not *as* His elect for certain, for it often may be a man's duty to be away, as Martha was in her place when serving, and only faulty when she thought censoriously of Mary ;—not as His complete flock, doubtless, for that were to exclude the old, and the sick, and the infirm, and little children ;—not as His select and undefiled remnant, for Judas was one of the twelve,—still as the earnest and promise of His Saints, the birth of Christ in its rudiments, and the dwelling-place of the Spirit ; and precious, even though but one out of the whole number, small though it be, belong at present to God's hidden ones ; nay, though, as is likely to be the case, in none of them there be more than the dawn of the True Light and the goings forth of the morning.—Some, too, will come at times, as accident guides them, giving promise that they may one day be settled and secured within the sacred fold. Some will come in times of grief or compunction, others in preparation for the Holy Communion.* Nor is it a service for those only who are present ; all men know the time, and many mark it, whose bodily presence is away. We have with us the hearts of many. Those who are conscious they are absent in the path of duty, will naturally turn their thoughts to the Church at the stated hour, and thence to God. They will recollect what prayers are then in course, and they will have fragments of them rising on their minds amid their worldly business. They will call to mind the day of the month, and the psalms used on it, and the chapters of Scripture then read out to the people. How pleasant to the way-faring man, on his journey, to think of what is going on in his own Church ! How soothing and consolatory to the old and infirm who cannot come, to follow in their thoughts, nay, with the prayers and psalms before them, what they do not hear ! Shall not those prayers

* It may be suggested here, that week-day services (with fasting) are the appropriate attendants on weekly communion, which has lately been advocated, especially in the impressive sermons of Mr. Dodsworth. When the one observance is used without the other, either the sacredness of the Lord's day is lost, from its wanting a peculiar Service, or the Eucharist is in danger of profanation, from its frequency leading us to remissness in preparing for it.

and holy meditations, separated though they be in place, ascend up together to the presence of God? Shall not they be with their Minister in spirit, who are provoked unto prayer by his service? Shall not their prayers unite in one before the Mercy-seat, sprinkled with the Atoning Blood, as a pure offering of incense unto the Father, and an acceptable sacrifice both for the world of sinners and for His purchased Church? Who then will dare speak of loneliness and solitude, because in man's eyes there are few worshippers brought together in one place? or, who will urge it as a defect in our Service, even if that were so? Who, moreover, will so speak, when even the Holy Angels are present when we pray, stand by us as guardians, sympathize in our need, and join us in our praises?

When thoughts, such as these, are set before the multitude of men, they appear to some of them strained and unnatural; to others, formal, severe, and tending to bondage. So must it be. Christ's commands will seem to be a servitude, and His privileges will be strange, till we act upon the one and embrace the other. To those who come in faith, to receive and to obey, who, instead of standing at a distance reasoning, criticising, investigating, adjusting, hear His voice and follow Him, not knowing whither they go; who throw themselves, their hearts and wills, their opinions and conduct, into His Divine System with a noble boldness, and serve Him on a venture, without experience of results, or skill to defend their own confidence by argument: who, when He says "Pray," "Continue in prayer," take His words simply, and forthwith pray, and that instantly, these men, through His great mercy and the power of the Holy Ghost working in them, will, at length, find persevering prayer, praise, and intercession, neither a bondage nor a barrenness. But it is in the nature of things, that Christ's word must be a law *while* it is good tidings. That very message of good tidings, that Christ saves sinners, is no good tidings to those who have not a heart to abandon sin; and as no one, by nature, has this good heart, and, even under grace, no one obtains it but gradually, there must ever be a degree of bondage in the Gospel, till, by obeying the Law and creating within us a love of God and holiness, we, by little and little, enter into the meaning of His promises.

May He lead us on evermore in the narrow way, who is the One Aid of all that need, the Helper of all that flee to Him for succour, the Life of them that believe, and the Resurrection of the dead!

SERMON XXII.

THE GOOD PART OF MARY.

LUKE x. 41, 42.

Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

EVERY word of Christ is good; it has its mission and its purpose, and does not fall to the ground.* It cannot be that He should ever speak transitory words, who is Himself the very Word of God, uttering, at His good pleasure, the deep counsels and the holy will of Him who is invisible. Every word of Christ is good; and did we receive a record of His sayings even from ordinary men, yet we might be sure that, whatever was thus preserved, whether spoken to disciple or enemy, whether by way of warning, advice, rebuke, comfort, argument, or condemnation, nothing had a merely occasional meaning, a partial scope and confined range, nothing regarded merely the moment, or the accident, or the audience; but all His sacred speeches, though clothed in a temporary garb, and serving an immediate end, and difficult, in consequence, to disengage from what is temporary in them and immediate, yet all have their force in every age, abiding in the Church on earth, "enduring for ever in heaven," and running on into eternity. They are our rule, "holy, just, and good," "the lantern of our feet and the light of our paths," in this very day as fully and as intimately as when they were first pronounced.

And if this had been so, though mere human diligence had gathered up the crumbs from His table, much more sure are we of the value of what is recorded of Him, receiving it, as we do, not from man, but from God. The Holy Ghost, who came to glorify Christ, and inspired the

* Basil. Const. Mon. 1.

Evangelists to write, did not trace out for us a barren Gospel ; but doubtless, praised be His name, selected and saved for us those words which were to have an especial usefulness in after times, those words which might be the Church's law, in faith, conduct, and discipline ; not a law written in tables of stone, but a law of faith and love, of the spirit, not of the letter ; a law for willing hearts, which could bear to "live by every word," however faint and low, "which proceeded from His mouth," and out of the seeds which the Heavenly Sower scattered could foster into life a Paradise of Divine Truth. Let us then humbly try, with this thought before us, and the help of His grace, to gain some benefit from the text.

Martha and Mary were the sisters of Lazarus, who was afterwards raised from the dead. All three lived together, but Martha was mistress of the house. St. Luke mentions, in a verse preceding the text, that Christ came to a certain village, "and a certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house." Being then at the head of a family, she had duties, which necessarily engaged her time and thoughts. And on the present occasion she was especially busy, from a wish to do honour to her Lord. "Martha was cumbered about much serving." On the other hand, her sister was free from the necessity of worldly business, by being the younger. "She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." The same distinction, at once of duty and character, appears in the narrative of Lazarus' death and restoration, as contained in St. John's Gospel. "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him ; but Mary sat still in the house."* Afterwards Martha "went her way and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Again, in the beginning of the following chapter, "There they made Him a supper ; and Martha served. . . . Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair."† In these passages the same general difference between the sisters presents itself, though in a different respect ;—Martha still directs and acts, while Mary is the retired and modest servant of Christ, who, at liberty from worldly duties, loves to sit at His feet and hear His voice, and silently honours Him with her best, without obtruding herself upon His sacred presence.

To return :—"Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone ? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto to her," in the words of the text, "Martha, Martha,

* John xi. 20.

† John xii. 2, 3.

thou art careful and troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful : and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her."

I shall draw two observations from this incident, and our Saviour's comment on it.

1. First, it would appear from hence, on His own authority, that there are two ways of serving Him—by active business, and by quiet adoration. Not, of course, that He speaks of those who call themselves His servants, and are not ; who counterfeit the one or the other manner of life ; either those who are "choked with the cares of this world," or those who lie idle and useless as the hard way-side, and "bring no fruit to perfection." Nor, again, as if His words implied that any Christians were called to nothing but religious worship, or any to nothing but active employment. There are busy men and men of leisure, who have no part in Him ; others, who at least are faulty, as altogether sacrificing leisure to business, or business to leisure. But putting aside the thought of the untrue and the extravagant, still after all there remain two classes of Christians ;—those who are like Martha, those like Mary, and both of them glorify Him in their own line, whether of labour or of quiet, in either case proving themselves not their own, but bought with a price, set on obeying, and constant in obeying His will. If they labour, it is for His sake ; and if they adore, it is still from love of Him.

And further, these two classes of His disciples do not choose for themselves their course of service, but are allotted it by Him. Martha might be the elder, Mary the younger. I do not say that it is never left to a Christian to choose his own path, whether He will minister with the Angels or adore with the Seraphim ; often it is ; and well may he bless God if he has it in his power freely to choose that good portion which our Saviour especially praises. But, for the most part, each has his own place marked out for him, if he will take it, in the course of His providence ; at least there can be no doubt *who* are intended for worldly cares. The necessity of getting a livelihood, the calls of a family, the duties of station and office, these are God's tokens, tracing out Martha's path for the many. Let, me, then, dismiss the consideration of these, and rather mention who they are who may be considered as called to the more favoured portion of Mary ; and in doing so I shall more clearly show what that portion is.

First, I instance the Old, as is natural, whose season of business is past, and who seem to be thereby reminded to serve God by prayer and contemplation. Such was Anna ; "she was of a great age, . . . and was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night

and day.”* Here we see both the description of person called, and the occupation itself. Further, observe, it was the promises stored in Christ the Saviour, which were the object, towards which her service had respect. When He was brought to the Temple, she “gave thanks to the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Again, the same description of person, certainly the same office, is set before us in the parable of the importunate widow. “He spake a parable unto them to this end, that we ought always to pray and not to faint.”† The widow said, “Avenge me of mine adversary.” “And shall not God avenge His own elect,” our Lord asks, “which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?” Add to these St. Paul’s description: “Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.”‡

Next those, who minister at the Altar, are included in Mary’s portion. “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee,” says the Psalmist, “that he may dwell in Thy courts.”§ According to the Apostles’ rule, the Deacons were to minister the worldly matters of the Church, the Evangelists were to go among the heathen, the Bishops were to govern; but the Elders were to remain, more or less, in the very bosom of the Lord’s people, in the courts of His house, in the services of His worship, “executing the priests’ office,”|| as we read in the book of Acts, offering up the Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, teaching, catechising, but not busy or troubled with the world. I do not mean that these offices were never united in one person, but that they were, in themselves, distinct, and that the tendency of the Apostles’ discipline was to separate off from the multitude of Christian Ministers certain who should serve God and the Church by giving thanks and intercession.

And next, I may mention children as in some respects partakers of Mary’s portion. Till they go out into the world, whether into its trades or its professions, their school-time should be, in some sort, a contemplation of their Lord and Saviour. Doubtless they cannot enter into sacred subjects as steadily as they may afterwards; they must not be unnaturally compelled to serve, and they are to be exercised in active habits of obedience, and in a needful discipline for the future; still, after all, we must not forget that He, who is the pattern of children as well as grown men, was, at twelve years old, found in His Father’s House; and that afterwards, when

* Luke ii. 36, 37.

† Luke xviii. 1.

‡ 1 Tim. v. 5.

§ Ps. lxxv. 4.

|| Acts xiii. 2.

He came thither before His passion, the children welcomed Him with the words, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and fulfilled a prophecy, and gained His praise, in so doing.

Further, we are told, on St. Paul's authority, (if that be necessary on so obvious a point,) that Mary's portion is allotted, more or less, to the unmarried. I say more or less, for Martha herself, though unmarried, yet as mistress of a household, was in a measure an exception; and because servants of God, as St. Paul, may remain unmarried, not to labour less, but to labour more directly for the Lord. St. Paul's words, some have observed, almost appear to refer to the language used in the text, when read in the original Greek; which is the more likely, as St. Luke was an attendant on the Apostle, and his Gospel seems to be cited elsewhere by him. As if he said, "The unmarried careth for the things of the Lord, so as to be holy both in body and in spirit. And this I speak for your own profit, that ye may sit at the Lord's feet without being cumbered."

And further still, there are vast numbers of Christians, in Mary's case, who are placed in various circumstances, and of whom no description can well be given; rich men having leisure, or active men during seasons of leisure, as when they leave their ordinary work for recreation's sake. Certainly our Lord meant that some or other of His servants should be ever worshipping Him in every place, and that not in their hearts merely, but with the ceremonial of devotion. St. Paul says, "I will therefore that men," even that sex whose especial punishment it was that they should "eat bread in the sweat of their face," "that men pray every where, *lifting up holy hands*," in common and public worship, "without wrath and doubting."* And we find, accordingly, that even a Roman Centurion, Cornelius, had found time, amid his military duties, to serve God continually, before he became a Christian, and was rewarded with the knowledge of the Gospel in consequence. "He prayed to God alway," we are told, and his "prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God."†

And last of all, in Mary's portion, doubtless, are included the souls of those who have lived and died in the faith and fear of Christ. Scripture tells us that they "rest from their labours;"‡ and, in the same sacred book, that their employment is prayer and praise. While God's servants below cry to Him day and night in every place; these "serve Him day and night in His temple" above, and from their resting place beneath the altar intercede, with loud voice, for those holy interests which they have left behind them. "How long, O Lord,

* 1 Tim. ii. 8.

† Acts x. 4.

‡ Rev. xiv 13.

holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" "We give Thee thanks, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power and hast reigned."*

This then is the company of those who stand in Mary's lot;—the Aged and the Children,—the Unmarried and the Priests of God,—and the Spirits of the just made perfect, all with one accord, like Moses on the Mount, lifting up holy hands to God, while their brethren fight, or meditating on the promises, or hearing the Saviour's teaching, or adorning and beautifying His worship.

2. Such being the two-fold character of Christian obedience, I observe, secondly, that Mary's portion is the better of the two. Our Lord does not expressly say so, but he clearly implies it: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." If His words be taken literally, they might, indeed, even mean that Martha's heart was not right with Him, which, it is plain from other parts of the history, they do not mean. Therefore, what He intimated surely was, that Martha's portion was full of snares, as being one of worldly labour, but that Mary could not easily go wrong in hers; that we may be busy in a wrong way; we cannot well adore Him except in a right one; that to serve God by prayer and praise continually, when we can do so consistently with other duties, is the pursuit of the "one thing needful," and emphatically "that good part which shall not be taken away from us."

It is impossible to read St. Paul's Epistles carefully without perceiving how faithfully they comment on this rule of our Lord's. Is it doubtful to any one, that they speak much and often of the duties of worship, meditation, thanksgiving, prayer and praise, intercession; and in such a way as to lead the Christian, so far as other duties will allow him, to make them the ordinary employment of his life? not, indeed, to neglect his lawful calling, nor even to be content without some active efforts to do good, whether in the way of the education of the young, attendance on the sick and needy, pastoral occupation, study, or other toil, yet to devote himself to a life at Jesus' feet, and a continual hearing of His word? And is it not plainly a privilege, above other privileges, if we really love Him, to be called to this unearthly life? Consider the following passages, in addition to those already quoted, and see if they can possibly be completely realized in the life of the common run of Christians, though all, doubtless, must cultivate inwardly, and in due measure bring into outward act, the spirit which

* Rev. vi. 10; xi. 17.

they enjoin. See if they be not illustrations of that more blessed portion with which Mary was favoured. "Continue in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving."* "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."† "Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings."‡ "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands."§ "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to each other in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always, for all things, unto God our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."|| "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, taking the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the Saints."¶ Thus St. Paul speaks: in like manner St. Peter; "Casting all your care (such as Martha's) upon Him, for He is concerned for you."** "Abstain from wine, that you may pray;"†† and St. James, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."‡‡

These are the injunctions of the Apostles; next, observe how they were fulfilled in the early Church. Before the Comforter came down, they "all (the Apostles) *continued*," St. Paul's very word in the passages above cited, "they persevered steadily, they endured, with one accord, in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his His brethren." And so, after Pentecost, "They *continuing*,"—the same word,—*"steadfastly enduring, daily, with one accord, in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God."*§§ That early privilege, we know, was soon taken from them as a body. Persecution arose, and they were "scattered"|||| to and fro, over the earth. Henceforth Martha's portion befel them. They were full of labours, whether pleasant or painful;—pleasant, for they had to preach the Gospel over the earth,—but painful as losing, not only earthly comforts, but, in some sort, spiritual quietness. They were separated from the Ordinances of Divine grace, as wanderers in a wilderness. Here and there, as they journeyed, they met a few of their

* Col. iv. 2.

† Col. iii. 16.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 16—20.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 8.

|| Eph. v. 18—20.

¶ Eph. vi 14—18.

** 1 Pet. v. 7.

†† 1 Pet. iv. 7.

‡‡ James v. 13.

§§ Acts i. 14; ii. 46.

|||| Acts viii. 1.

brethren "prophets and teachers, ministering to the Lord" at Antioch ; or Philip's daughters, "virgins which did prophesy"* at Cæsarea. They met for worship in secret, fearing their enemies ; and in course of time, when the fire of persecution became fiercer, they fled to the deserts, and there set up houses for God's service. Thus Mary's portion was withheld from the Church for many years, while it laboured and suffered. St. Paul himself, that great Apostle, though he had his seasons of privilege, when he was caught up into the third heaven and heard the hymns of Angels, yet he too was a man of contention and toil. He fought for the Truth, and so laid the foundations of the Temple. He was "sent to preach, not to baptize." He was not allowed to build the House of God, for He was, in figure, like David, a "man of blood." He did but bring together into one, the materials for the Sacred Building. The Order of the Ministry, the Succession of Apostles, the Services of Worship, the Rule of Discipline, all that is calm, beautiful, and soothing in our Holy Religion, was brought forth piecemeal, out of his writings by his friends and fellow-disciples, in his own day, and in the time after him, as the state of the Church admitted. Accordingly, as peace was in any measure enjoyed, so the building was carried on, here and there, at this time and that, in the cavern, or the desert, or the mountain, where God's stray servants lived ; till a time of peace came, and by the end of four hundred years the work was accomplished. From that time onwards to the present day, Mary's lot has been offered to vast multitudes of Christians, if they could receive it. If they knew their blessedness, there are numbers now, in various ranks of society, who might enjoy the privilege of continual praise and prayer, and a seat at Jesus' feet. Doubtless they are, after all, but the few ; for the great body of Christians have but the Lord's day as a day of rest, and would be deserting their duty if they lived on other days as on it. But what is not granted to some, is granted to others, to serve God in His Temple, and be at rest. Who these favoured persons are, has already been said generally ; which is all that can be said in a matter in which every one must decide for himself, according to his best light and his own peculiar case. Yet surely, without attempting to pronounce upon individuals, so far at least we may say, that if there be an age when Mary's portion is altogether let alone and decried, that age is necessarily so far a stranger to the spirit of the Gospel.

Let me then, in conclusion, ask, for our own edification, whether perchance this is not such an age ? I say "perchance ;" because in

* Acts xiii. 2 ; xxi. 9.

matters of this kind, men show their motives and principles less openly than in others, as being of a nature more immediately lying between themselves and God. Yet, taking account of this, at least is not this an age in which few persons are in a condition, from the very state of society, to "give themselves continually to prayer" and other direct religious services? Has not the desire of wealth so eaten into our hearts, that we think poverty the worst of ills, that we think the security of property the first of blessings, that we measure all things by mammon, that we not only labour for it ourselves, but so involve in our own evil earnestness all around us, that they cannot keep from the pursuit of it though they would? Does not the frame-work of society move forward on such a plan as to enlist into the service of the world all its members, almost whether they will or no? Would not a man be thought unambitious and unproductive, who cared not to push forward in pursuit of that which Scripture calls "the root of all evil," the love of which it calls "covetousness which is idolatry," and the possession of which it solemnly declares all but excludes a man from the kingdom of Heaven? Alas! can this be denied? And therefore, of course, the entire system of tranquil devotion, holy meditation, freedom from worldly cares, which our Saviour praises in the case of Mary, is cast aside, misunderstood, or rather missed altogether, as much as the glorious sunshine by a blind man, slandered and ridiculed as something contemptible and vain. Surely, no one, who is candid, can doubt, that, were Mary now living, did she choose on principle that state of life in which Christ found her, were she content to remain at Jesus' feet hearing His word and disengaged from this troublesome world, she would be blamed and pitied. Careless men would gaze strangely, and wise men compassionately, on such an one, as wasting her life, and choosing a melancholy, cheerless portion. Long ago was this the case. Even in holy Martha, zealous as she was and true-hearted, even in her instance we are reminded of the impatience and disdain with which those who are far different from her, the children of this world, regard such as dedicate themselves to God. Long ago, even in her, we seem to witness, as in type, the rash, unchristian way in which this age disparages devotional services. Do we never hear it said, that the daily Service of the Church is unnecessary? Is it never hinted that it is scarcely worth while to keep it up unless we get numbers to attend it, as if one single soul, if but one, were not precious enough for Christ's love and His Church's rearing? Is it never objected, that a partially-filled Church is a discouraging sight, as if, after all, our Lord Jesus had chosen the many and not the few to be His true disciples? Is it never maintained, that a Christian Minister is off his post unless he is for ever labouring

for the heartless many, instead of ministering to the more religious few? Alas! there must be something wrong among us; when our defenders recommend the Church on the mere plea of its activity, its popularity, and its visible usefulness, and would scarcely scruple to give us up, had we *not* the many on our side! If our ground of boasting be, that rich men, and mighty men, and many men love us, it never can be a religious boast, and may be our condemnation. Christ made His feast for "the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind." It is the widow and the fatherless, the infirm, the helpless, the devoted, bound together in prayer, who are the strength of the Church. It is their prayers, be they many or few, the prayers of Mary and such as Mary, who are the safety, under Christ, of those who with Paul and Barnabas fight the Lord's battles. "It is but lost labour to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows," if prayers are discontinued. It is mere infatuation, if we think to resist the enemies who at this moment are at our doors, if our Churches remain shut, and we give up to prayer but a few minutes in the day.

Blessed indeed are they whom Christ calls near to Him to be His own peculiar attendants and familiar friends,—more blessed if they obey and fulfil their calling! Blessed even if they are allowed to seize intervals of such service towards Him; but favoured and honoured beyond thought, if they can without breach of duty, put aside worldly things with full purpose of heart, renounce the pursuit of wealth, keep clear of family cares, and present themselves as a holy offering, without spot or blemish, to Him who died for them.* These are they who "follow Him whithersoever He goeth," and to them He more especially addresses those lessons of faith and resignation, which are recorded in His Gospel. "Take heed," He says, "and beware of covetousness, for man's life consisteth not in the overabundance of the things which he possesseth. Take no care for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on. Consider the lilies how they grow, they toil not, they spin not. Seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye unsettled; for all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good plea-

* The life here advocated is one of which Prayer, Praise, Intercession, and other devotional services, are made the object and business, in the same sense in which a certain profession or trade is the object and business of life to the mass of men: one in which devotion is the end to which every thing else gives way. This explanation will answer the question, *how much* of each day it supposes set aside for devotion. Callings of this world do not necessarily occupy the whole, or half, or a third of our time, but they *rule* and *dispose* of the whole of it.

sure to give you the Kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms ; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that He will gird Himself,"—He who before let them sit at His feet hearing His word, or anoint His feet with ointment kissing them, He in turn, as He did before His passion, by an inexpressible condescension, "will gird Himself ; and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. Be ye therefore ready also ; for the Son of man cometh at an hour, when ye think not."*

SERMON XXIII.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP A REMEDY FOR EXCITEMENTS.

JAMES v. 13.

Is any among you afflicted ? let him pray. Is any merry ? let him sing psalms.

ST. JAMES seems to imply in these words, that there is that in religious worship which supplies all our spiritual need, which suits every mood of mind and every variety of circumstances, over and above the heavenly and supernatural assistance which we are allowed to expect from it. Prayer and praise seem in his view to be a universal remedy, a panacea, as it is called, which ought to be used at once, whatever it be that affects us. And, as is implied in ascribing to them this universal virtue, they produce very opposite effects, according to our need ; allaying or carrying off the fever of the mind, as the case may be. The Apostle is not speaking of *sin* in the text ; he speaks of the *emotions* of the mind, whether joyful or sorrowful, of good and bad spirits ;

* Luke xii. 15—40.

and for these and all other such disturbances, prayer and praise are a medicine. Sin indeed has its appropriate remedies too, and more serious ones; penitence, self-abasement, self-revenge, mortification, and the like. But the text supposes the case of a Christian, not of a mere penitent,—not of scandalous wickedness, but of emotion, agitation of mind, regret, longing, despondency, mirthfulness, transport, or rapture; and in case of such ailments he says, prayer and praise is the remedy.

Indisposition of body shows itself in a *pain* somewhere or other;—a distress, which draws our thoughts to it, centres them upon it, impedes our ordinary way of going on, and throws the mind off its balance. Such too is indisposition of the soul, of whatever sort, be it passion or affection, hope or fear, joy or grief. It takes us off from the clear contemplation of the next world, ruffles us, and makes us restless. In a word, it is what we call an excitement of mind. Excitements are the indisposition of the mind; and of these excitements in different ways the services of divine worship are the proper antidotes. How they are so shall now be considered.

1. Excitements are of two kinds, secular and religious: First, let us consider secular excitements. Such is the pursuit of gain, or of power, or of distinction. Amusements are excitements; the applause of a crowd, emulations, hopes, risks, quarrels, contests, disappointments, successes. In such cases the object pursued naturally absorbs the mind, and excludes all thoughts but those relating to itself. Thus a man is sold over into bondage to this world. He has one idea, and one only before him, which becomes his idol. Day by day he is engrossed by this one thing, to which his heart pays worship. It may attract him through the imagination, or through the reason; it may appeal to his heart, or to his self-interest, or to his pride; still, whether we be young or old, rich or poor, each age, each fortune is liable to its own peculiar excitement, which has power to fascinate the eye of our minds, to enervate and destroy us. Not all at once (God forbid!) but by a gradual process, till every thought of religion is lost before the contemplation of this nearer good.

The most ordinary of these excitements, at least in this country, is the pursuit of gain. A man may live from week to week in the fever of a decent covetousness, to which he gives some more specious name, (for instance, desire of doing his duty by his family,) till the heart of religion is eaten out of him. He may live and die in his farm or in his merchandise. Or he may be labouring for some distinction, which depends on his acquitting himself well on certain trying occasions, and requires a laborious preparation beforehand. Or he may be idly carried away by some light object of sense, which fills his mind with empty

dreams and pains which profit not. Or he may be engaged in the general business of life; be full of schemes and projects, of political manœuvres and efforts, of hate, or jealousy, or resentment, or triumph. He may be busy in managing, persuading, outwitting, resisting other men. Again, he may be in one or other of these states, not for a life, but for a season; and this is the more general case. Any how, *while* he is so circumstanced, whether for a longer or a shorter season, this will hold good;—viz. the thought of religion is excluded by the force of the excitement which is on him.

Now then, observe what is the remedy. “Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.” Here we see one very momentous use of prayer and praise to all of us; it breaks the current of worldly thoughts. And this is the singular benefit of stated worship, that it statedly interferes with the urgency of worldly excitements. Our daily prayer, morning and evening, suspends our occupations of time and sense. And especially the daily prayers of the Church do this. I say especially, because a man, amid the business of life, is often tempted to defraud himself of his private devotions by the pressure of engagements. He has not many minutes to give to them; and, if by accident they are broken in upon, the season is gone and lost. But the public service is of a certain length, and cannot be interrupted; and it is long enough to calm and steady the mind. Scripture must be read, psalms must be sung, prayers must be offered; every thing comes in course. I say, it is impossible (under God’s blessing) for any one to attend the Daily Service of the Church “with reverence and godly fear,” and a wish and effort to give his thoughts to it, and not find himself thereby sobered and brought to recollection. What kinder office is there, when a man is agitated, than for a friend to put his hand upon him by way of warning, to startle and recall him? It often has the effect of saving us from angry words, or extravagant talking, or inconsiderate jesting, or rash resolves. And such is the blessed effect of the sacred Services, on Christians busied about many things; reminding them of the one thing needful, and keeping them from being drawn into the great whirlpool of time and sense.

This, let it be observed, is one important benefit arising from the institution of the Lord’s day. Over and above the privilege of being allowed one day in seven for religious festivity, the Christian may accept it as a merciful break in upon his usual employments, lest they should engross him. Most men, indeed, perceive this; they will feel wearied with the dust of this world when Saturday comes, and understand it to be a mercy that they are not obliged to go on toiling without cessation. But, still there are many who, if it were not an express

ordinance of religion, would feel tempted, or think it their duty, to continue their secular labours, even though the custom of society allowed them to rest. Many, as it is, are so tempted; that is, at times, when they have some pressing object in view, and think they cannot afford to lose a day: and many always,—such, for instance, as are in certain professions, which are not regulated (as trade is, more or less,) by times and places. And great numbers, it is to be feared, yield to the temptation; and the evil effect of it shows itself in various miserable ways, even in the overthrow of their health and reason. In all these cases, then, the weekly Services of prayer and praise come to us as a gracious relief, a pause from the world, a glimpse of the third heaven, lest the world should rob us of our hope, and enslave us to that hard master who is plotting our eternal destruction.

You see, then, how secular excitements are remedied by religious worship; viz. by breaking them up, and disabling them.

2. Next, let us consider how religious excitements are set right by the same divine medicine.

If we had always continued in the way of light and truth, obeying God from children, doubtless we should know little of those swellings and tumults of the soul, which are so common among us. Men who have grown up in the faith and fear of God, have a calm and equable piety; so much so, that they are often charged on that very account with being dull, cold, formal, insensible, dead to the next world. Now, it stands to reason, that a man who has always lived in the contemplation and improvement of his Gospel privileges, will not feel that agitating surprise and vehemence of joy, which he would feel, and ought to feel, if he had never known any thing of them before. The jailor, who for the first time heard the news of salvation through Christ, gave evident signs of transport. This, certainly is natural and right; still it is a state of excitement, and, if I might say it, all states of excitement have dangerous tendencies. Hence one never can be sure of a new convert; for, in that elevated state of mind in which he is at first, the passions have much more sway than the reason or conscience; and, unless he takes care, they may hurry him away, just as the wind might do, in a wrong direction. He is balanced on a single point, on the summit of an excited mind, and he may easily fall. However, though this danger would not exist, or, at least, not commonly or seriously, did men turn to God from early youth. yet, alas! in matter of fact they do not so turn; in matter of fact they are open to the influence of excitement, when they begin to seek God; and the question is, what is then to be done with them?

Now this advice is often given:—"Indulge the excitement; when

you flag, seek for another; live upon the thought of God; go about doing good; let your light shine before men; tell them what God has done for your soul;"—by all which is meant, when we go into particulars, that they ought to fancy that they have something above all other men; ought to neglect their worldly calling, or at best only bear it as a cross; join themselves to some particular set of religionists; take part in this or that religious society; go to hear strange preachers, and obtrude their new feelings and new opinions upon others, at times proper and improper. I am speaking now of the temper, not of those who profess adherence to the Church, but of such as detach themselves, more or less, from its discipline; and the reason I allude to them is this. It is often said, that separation and dissent are but accidents of a religious temper; that they who commit them, if pious, are the same in heart as Churchmen, only divided by some outward difference of forms and circumstances. Not so; the mind of dissent, viewed in itself, is far other than the mind of Christ and His Holy Church Catholic; in whatever proportion it may or may not be realized in individuals. It is full of self-importance, irreverence, censoriousness, display, and tumult. It is right, therefore, ever to insist, that it is different, lest men should be seduced into it, by being assured that it is not different.

That it is different from the mind and spirit of the early Christians at least, is quite plain from history. If there was a time, when those particular irregularities, which now are so common, were likely to abound, it was in the primitive Church. Men, who had lived all their lives in the pollutions of sin unspeakable, who had been involved in the darkness of heathenism, were suddenly brought to the light of Christian truth. Their sins were all freely forgiven them, clean washed away in the waters of Baptism. A new world of ideas was opened upon them; and the most astonishing objects presented to their faith. What a state of transport must have been theirs! We know it was so, by the account of such men in the book of Acts. The jailor "*rejoiced*, believing in God, with all his house." What an excited and critical state was theirs! Critical and dangerous in proportion to its real blessedness; for, in proportion to the privileges we enjoy, ever will be our risk of misusing them. In spite, then, of their blessedness, they were in a state of risk, and that from the excitement of their minds. How then did they escape that enthusiasm which now prevails, that irreverence, immodesty, and rudeness? I say, if in any age that feverish spirit was likely to have prevailed, which now prevails, the early times of the Gospel was such; how is it we do not read generally of what happened in a measure and for a season in the Corinthian Church, of Christians disobeying their Rulers, saying that their own hearts were the best judges in religious matters, censuring those about them, taking teachers

for themselves, and so breaking up the Church of Christ into ten thousand parts? If at any time the outward frame-work of Christianity was in jeopardy, surely it was then. How was it the ungovernable elements within it did not burst forth and shiver to pieces the vessel which contained them? How was it that for fifteen hundred years the Church was preserved from those peculiar affections of mind and irregularities of feeling and conduct, which now torment it like an ague?

Now certainly, looking at external and second causes, the miracles had much to do in securing this blessed sobriety in the early Christians. These kept them from wilfulness and extravagance, and tempered them to the spirit of godly fear. Thus St. Paul, when converted, was not let go by himself, so to speak. His merciful Lord kept His hand upon him, and directed his every step, lest he should start aside and go astray. Thus He would not tell him all at once what to do, though St. Paul wished it; but bade him "arise, and go into the city," and there it was to be told him what he was to do. He was *led by the hand* (a fit emblem of his spiritual condition,) and brought to Damascus. Then he was three days without sight, and without meat and drink. During this time he was still kept in suspense and ignorance of what was to happen, and was employed in praying. Such desolateness—his darkness, fasting, and suspense—had a sobering influence. Then Ananias was sent to him to baptize him. Forthwith he began to preach Christ at Damascus, but was soon checked, thwarted, sent into Arabia out of the way, for three years. Then he returned to Damascus, and, again preaching Christ, was in no long time obliged to flee for his life. He came to Jerusalem, and began again to preach. Here he first had a difficulty in getting acknowledged by the Apostles, who were for a time afraid of him; then the Jews laid a plot to kill him. As he was praying in the Temple, Christ appeared to him, and bade him depart from Jerusalem. The brethren brought him down to Caesarea; thence he went to Tarsus. Now, who does not see in this history how the Apostle was repressed and brought under by the plain commands and providences of God, hurrying him to and fro, without saying why? After all this, many years passed, before he was employed to preach to the heathen, and then only after a solemn ordination.

Thus, God's miraculous providence, awing and controlling the heart, would seem to be one especial means by which the early Christians were kept from enthusiasm; and the persecutions of the Church became another. But the more ordinary means was one which we may enjoy at this day, if we choose; the course of religious Services, the round of prayer and praise,—which, indeed, was also part of St. Paul's

discipline, as we have seen, and which has a most gracious effect upon the restless and excited mind, giving it an outlet, yet withal calming, soothing, directing, purifying it.

To go into details. It often happens that in a family who have been brought up together, one suddenly takes what is called a religious turn. Such a person wishes to be more religious than the rest, wishes to do something more than ordinary, but does not know exactly what to do. You will find, generally, that he joins himself to some dissenting party, mainly for this reason,—to evidence to himself greater strictness. His mind is under excitement; he seems to say with St. Paul, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” This is the cause, again and again of persons falling from the Church. And hence, a notion has got abroad that dissenting bodies have more of true religion within them than the Church; I say, for this reason, because earnest men, awaking to a sense of religion, wish to do something more than usual, and join sects and heresies as a relief to their minds, by way of ridding themselves of strong feelings, which, pent up within them, distress them. And I cannot deny, that in this way these bodies do gain, and the Church does lose, earnestly religious people, or rather those who would have been such in time; for it is, I fear, too true that, while the sects in question are in this way recruited and improved from the Church, the persons themselves, who join them, are injured. They lose the greater part of that religious light and warmth which hung about them, even though they have been hitherto careless, and but partially availed themselves of it. It is as if a living hand were to touch cold iron; the iron is somewhat warmed, but the hand is chilled. And thus the blossom of truth, the promise of real religion, is lost to the Church. Men begin well, but being seduced by their own waywardness, fall away.

Here then, if we knew how to employ them, the Services of the Church come in to soothe and guide the agitated mind. “Is any afflicted? let him pray; is any merry? let him sing psalms.” Is any in a perturbed state of mind? he need not go off to strange preachers and meetings, in order to relieve himself of his uneasiness. We can give him a stricter rule of life, and a safer one. Did not our Lord make a distinction between the life of Martha, and that of Mary, and without disclaiming Martha, who was troubled for His sake with the toils of life, yet praise Mary the rather, who sat at His feet? Does not St. Paul make a distinction between the duties *necessary* for a Christian, and those which are *comely and of good report*? Let restless persons attend upon the worship of the Church, which will attune their minds in harmony with Christ’s Law, while it unburdens them. Did not St. Paul “pray” during his three days of blindness? Afterwards he was pray-

ing in the Temple, when Christ appeared to him. Let this be well considered. We may build Houses of God, without number, up and down the land, as indeed our duty is : we may multiply resident ministers : we may (with a less commendable zeal) do our utmost to please the many or the wealthy ; but all this will not deprive Dissenting bodies of their virtue and charm, such as it is. Their strength is their semblance of a strictness beyond members of the Church. Till we act up to our professed principles more exactly ; till we have in deed and actual practice more frequent Services of praise and prayer, more truly Catholic plans for honouring God and benefitting man ; till we exhibit the nobler and more beautiful forms of Christian devotedness for the admiration and guidance of the better sort, we have, in a manner, done nothing. Surely we want something more than the material walls, we want the "spirit and truth" of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the worshippers "with one accord continuing in the Temple, with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God," persevering and prevailing in prayer, and thus, without seeking it, "having favour with all the people."

Is any one then desirous of gaining comfort to his soul, of bringing Christ's presence home to his very heart, and of doing the highest and most glorious things for the whole world ? I have told him how to proceed. Let him praise God ; let holy David's Psalter be as familiar words in his mouth, his daily service, ever repeated, yet ever new and ever sacred. Let him pray ; especially let him intercede. Doubt not the power of faith and prayer to effect all things with God. However you try, you cannot do works to compare with those, which faith and prayer accomplish in the name of Christ. Did you give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, you could not do so much as by continual intercession. Few are rich, few can suffer for Christ ; all may pray. Were you an Apostle of the Church, or a Prophet, you could not do more than you can do by the power of prayer. Go not then astray to find out new modes of serving God and benefitting man. I show you "a more excellent way." Come to our Services ; come to our Litanies ; throw yourself out of your own selfish heart ; pour yourself out upon the thought of sin and sinners, upon the contemplation of God's Throne, of Jesus the Mediator between God and man, and of that glorious Church to which the dispensation of His merits is committed. Aspire to be what Christ would make you, His friend ; having power with Him and prevailing. Other men will not pray for themselves. You may pray for them and for the general Church ; and while you pray, you will find enough in the defects of your praying to remind you of your own nothingness, and to keep you from pride while you aim at perfection.

But I must now draw to an end. Thus, in both ways, whether our excitements arise from objects of this world or the next, praise and prayer will be, through God's mercy, our remedy; keeping the mind from running to waste; calming, soothing, sobering, steadying it; attuning it to the will of God and the mind of the Spirit, teaching it to love all men, to be cheerful and thankful, and to be resigned in all the dispensations of Providence towards us.

O that we knew our own true bliss, now that Christ is come, instead of being, as we still are for the most part, like the heathen, as sheep without a shepherd! May the Good Lord fulfil His purpose towards us in His own time! Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

INTERCESSION.

EPHES. vi. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

EVERY one knows, who has any knowledge of the Gospel, that Prayer is one of its especial ordinances; but not every one, perhaps, has noticed what kind of prayer its inspired teachers most carefully enjoin. Prayer for self is the most obvious of duties, as soon as leave is given us to pray at all, which Christ distinctly and mercifully accorded, when he came. This is plain from the nature of the case; but He Himself has given us also an express command and promise about ourselves, to "ask and it shall be given to us." Yet it is observable, that though prayer for self is the first and plainest of Christian duties, the Apostles especially insist on another kind of prayer; prayer for others, for ourselves with others, for the Church, and for the world, that it may be brought into the Church. Intercession is the characteristic of Christian worship, the privilege of the heavenly adoption, the exercise of the perfect and spiritual mind. This is the subject to which I shall now direct your attention.

1. First, let us turn to the express injunctions of Scripture. For instance, the text itself: "Praying in every season with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and abstaining from sleep for the purpose, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Observe the earnestness of the intercession here inculcated; "in every season," "with all supplication," and "to the loss of sleep." Again, in the epistle to the Colossians; "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving, withal praying for us also." Again, "Brethren, pray for us." And again in detail; "I exhort that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in authority. I will, therefore, that men pray in every place." On the other hand, go through the Epistles, and reckon up how many exhortations occur therein to pray merely for self. You will find there are few, or rather none at all. Even those which seem at first sight to be such, will be found really to have in view the good of the Church. Thus, to take the words following the text, St. Paul, in asking his brethren's prayers, seems to pray for himself; but he goes on to explain why,—“that he might make known the Gospel:” or elsewhere,—that “the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified;” or, as where he says,—“Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret,”* for this too was a petition in order to the edification of the Church.

Next, consider St. Paul's own example, which is quite in accordance with his exhortations: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."†

The instances of prayer, recorded in the Book of Acts, are of the same kind, being almost entirely of an intercessory nature, as offered at ordinations, confirmations, cures, missions, and the like. For instance; "As they interceded before the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Again, "And Peter put

* C.I. iv. 2. 1 Thes. v. 25. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. 8. 2 Thes. iii. 1. 1 Cor. xiv. 13.

† Eph. i. 16, 17. Phil. i. 3, 4. Col. i. 3. 1 Thes. i. 2.

them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed : and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise.”*

2. Such is the lesson taught us by the words and deeds of the Apostles and their brethren. Nor could it be otherwise, if Christianity be a social religion, as it is pre-eminently. If Christians are to live together, they will pray together ; and united prayer is necessarily of an intercessory character, as being offered for each other and for the whole, and for self as one of the whole. In proportion, then, as unity is an especial Gospel-duty, so does Gospel prayer partake of a social character ; and Intercession becomes a token of the existence of a Church Catholic.

Accordingly, the foregoing instances of intercessory prayer are supplied by *Christians*. On the other hand, contrast with these the recorded instances of prayer in men who were *not* Christians, and you will find they are not intercessory. For instance : St. Peter’s prayer on the house-top was, we know, answered by the revelation of the call of the Gentiles : viewing it then by the light of the texts already quoted, we may conclude, that, as was the answer, such was the prayer,—that it had reference to others. On the other hand, Cornelius, not yet a Christian, was also rewarded with an answer to his prayer. “Thy prayer is heard ; call for Simon, whose surname is Peter ; *he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.*” Can we doubt from these words of the Angel, that his prayers had been offered for himself especially ? Again on St. Paul’s conversion, we are told, “Behold he prayeth.” It is plain he was praying for himself ; and, observe, it was before he was a Christian. Thus, if we are to judge of the relative prominence of religious duties by the recorded instances of the performance of them, we should say that Intercession is the kind of prayer distinguishing a Christian from such as are not Christians.

3. But the instance of St. Paul opens upon us a second reason for this distinction. Intercession is the especial observance of the Christian, because he alone is in a condition to offer it. It is the function of the justified and obedient, of the sons of God, “who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit ;” not of the carnal and unregenerate. This is plain even to natural reason. The blind man, who was cured, said of Christ, “We know that God heareth not sinners ; but if any man *be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will*, him He heareth.”† Saul the persecutor obviously could not intercede like St. Paul the Apostle. He had yet to be baptized and forgiven. It would be a presumption and an extravagance in a penitent, before his regeneration, to do aught but

* Acts xiii. 2, 3 ; ix. 40.

† John ix. 31.

confess his sins and deprecate wrath. He has not yet proceeded, he has had no leave to proceed, out of himself; and has enough to do within. His conscience weighs heavy on him, nor has he "the wings of a dove to flee away and be at rest." We need not, I say, go to Scripture for information on so plain a point. Our first prayers ever must be for ourselves. Our own salvation is our personal concern; till we labour to secure it, till we try to live religiously, and pray to be enabled to do so, nay, and have made progress, it is but hypocrisy, or at best it is overbold, to busy ourselves with others. I do not mean that prayer for self always comes first in order of time, and Intercession second. Blessed be God, we were all made His children before we had actually sinned; we began life in purity and innocence. Intercession is never more appropriate than when sin had been utterly abolished, and the heart was most affectionate and least selfish. Nor would I deny, that a care for the souls of other men may be the first symptom of a man's beginning to think about his own; or that persons, who are conscious to themselves of much guilt, often pray for those whom they revere and love, when under the influence of fear, or in agony, or other strong emotion, and, perhaps, at other times. Still it is true, that there is something incongruous and inconsistent in a man's presuming to intercede, who is an habitual and deliberate sinner. Also it is true that most men do, more or less fall away from God, sully their baptismal robe, need the grace of repentance, and have to be awakened to the necessity of prayer for self, as the first step in observing prayer of any kind.

"God heareth not sinners;" nature tells us this; but none but God Himself could tell us that He will hear and answer those who are not sinners; for "when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, and can claim no reward for our services." But He has graciously promised us this mercy, in Scripture, as the following texts will show.

For instance, St. James says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much." St. John, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, *because we keep His commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."* Next let us weigh carefully our Lord's solemn announcements uttered shortly before His crucifixion, and, though addressed primarily to His Apostles, yet, surely, in their degree belonging to all who "believe on Him through their word." We shall find that consistent obedience, mature, habitual, lifelong holiness, is therein made the condition of His intimate favour, and of power in Intercession. "If ye abide in Me," He says, "and My words abide

* James v. 16. 1 John iii. 22.

in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit : so shall ye be My disciples. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you ; abide ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth ; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you.”* From this solemn grant of the peculiarly Gospel privilege of being the “ friends ” of Christ, it is certain, that as the prayer of repentance gains for us sinners Baptism and justification, so our higher gift of having power with Him and prevailing, depends on our “ adding to our faith virtue.”

Let us turn to the examples given us of holy men under former dispensations, whose obedience and privileges were anticipations of the evangelical. St. James, after the passage already cited from his epistle, speaks of Elijah thus : “ Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.” Righteous Job was appointed by Almighty God to be the effectual intercessor for his erring friends. Moses, who was “ faithful in all the house ” of God, affords us another eminent instance of intercessory power ; as in the Mount, and on other occasions, when he pleaded for his rebellious people ; in the battle with Amalek, when Israel continued conquering as long as his hands remained lifted up in prayer. Here we have a striking emblem of that continued, earnest, unwearied prayer of men “ lifting up *holy hands*,” which, under the Gospel, prevails with Almighty God. Again, in the book of Jeremiah, Moses and Samuel are spoken of as mediators so powerful, that only the sins of the Jews were too great for the success of their prayers. In like manner it is implied, in the book of Ezekiel, that three such as Noah, Daniel, and Job, would suffice, in some cases, to save guilty nations from judgment. Sodom might have been rescued by ten. Abraham, though he could not save the abandoned city just mentioned, yet was able to save Lot from the overthrow ; as at another time he interceded successfully for Abimelech. The very intimation given him of God’s purpose towards Sodom was of course an especial honour, and marked him as the friend of God. “ Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation ; and all the nations of the world shall be blessed in him ? ” The reason follows, “ *for I know him*, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they

* John xv. 7—15.

shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.”*

4. The history of God’s dealings with Abraham will afford us an additional lesson, which must be ever borne in mind in speaking of the privilege of the saints on earth as intercessors between God and man. I can fancy a person, from apprehension lest the belief in it should interfere with the true reception of the doctrine of the Cross, perplexed at finding it in the foregoing texts so distinctly connected with obedience : I say *perplexed*, for I will not contemplate the case of those, though there are such, who, when the text of Scripture seems to them to be at variance with itself, and one portion to diverge from another, will not allow themselves to be perplexed, will not suspend their minds and humbly wait for light, will not believe that the Divine Scheme is larger and deeper than their own capacities, but boldly wrest into apparent agreement what is already harmonious in God’s infinite counsels, though not to them. I speak to perplexed persons ; and would have them observe that Almighty God has in this very instance of Abraham our spiritual father, been mindful of that other aspect under which the most highly exalted among the children of flesh must ever stand in His presence. It is elsewhere said of him, “ Abraham *believed* in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness,”† as St. Paul points out, when he is discoursing upon the free grace of God in our redemption. Even Abraham was justified by faith, though he was perfected by works ; and this being told us in the book of Genesis, seems as if an intimation to the perplexed inquirer that his difficulty can be but an apparent one,—that, while God reveals the one doctrine, He is not the less careful of the other also, nor rewards His servants (though He rewards them) for works done by their own strength. On the other hand, it is a caution to us, who rightly insist on the prerogatives imparted by His grace, ever to remember that it only can ennoble and exalt us in His sight. Abraham is our spiritual father ; and as he is, so are his children. In us, as in him, faith must be the foundation of all that is acceptable with God. “ By faith we stand,” by faith we are justified, by faith we obey, by faith our works are sanctified. Faith applies to us again and again the grace of our Baptism ; faith opens upon us the virtue of all other ordinances of the Gospel,—of the Holy Communion, which is the highest. By faith we prevail “ in the hour of death and in the day of judgment.” And the distinctness and force with which this is told us in the Epistles, and its obviousness, even to our natural reason, may be the cause why less stress is laid in them on the duty of prayer for self.

* Gen. xviii. 17—19.

† Gen. xv. 6.

The very instinct of faith will lead a man to do this without set command, and the Sacraments secure its observance.—So much then, by way of caution, on the influence of faith upon our salvation, furthering it, yet not interfering with the distinct office of works in giving virtue to our intercession.

And here let me observe on a peculiarity of Scripture, its speaking as if separate rewards attended on separate graces, according to our Lord's words, "To him that hath more shall be given;" so that what has been said in contrasting faith and works, is but one instance under a general rule. Thus, in the sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes are pronounced on separate virtues respectively. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" and the rest in like manner. I am not attempting to determine what these particular graces are, what the rewards, what the aptitude of the one to the other, what the real connection between the reward and the grace, or how far one grace can be separated from another in fact. We know that all depend on one root, faith, and are but differently developed in different persons. Again, we see in Scripture that the same reward is not invariably assigned to the same grace, as if, from the intimate union between all graces, their rewards might (as it were) be lent and interchanged one with another; yet enough is said there to direct our minds to the existence of the principle itself, though we be unable to fathom its meaning and consequences. It is somewhat upon this principle that our Articles ascribe justification to faith *only*, as a symbol of the free grace of our redemption; just as in the parable of the Pharisee and publican, our Lord would seem to impute it to self-abasement, and in His words to the "woman which was a sinner," to love as well as to faith, while St. James connects it with works. In other instances the reward follows in the course of nature. Thus the gift of wisdom is the ordinary result of trial borne religiously; courage, of endurance. In this way St. Paul draws out a series of spiritual gifts one from another, experience from patience, hope from experience, boldness and confidence from hope. I will add but two instances from the Old Testament. The commandment says, "Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long;" a promise which was signally fulfilled in the case even of the Rechabites, who were not of Israel. Again, from Daniel's history we learn that illumination, or other miraculous power, is the reward of fasting and prayer. "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled And he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to under-

stand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days." With this passage compare St. Peter's vision about the Gentiles while he prayed and fasted; and, again, our Lord's words about casting out the "dumb and deaf spirit," "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."* And it is by a similar appointment, that Intercession is the prerogative and gift of the obedient and holy.

5. Why should we be unwilling to admit what it is so great a consolation to know? Why should we refuse to credit the transforming power and efficacy of our Lord's sacrifice? Surely He did not die for any common end, but in order to exalt man, who was of the dust of the field, into "heavenly places." He did not die to leave him as he was, sinful, ignorant, and miserable. He did not die to see His purchased possession, as feeble in good works, as corrupt, as poor-spirited, and as desponding, as before He came. Rather He died to renew him after His own image, to make him a being He might delight and rejoice in, to make him "partaker of the divine nature," to fill him within and without with a flood of grace and glory, to pour out upon him gift upon gift, and virtue upon virtue, and power upon power, each acting upon each, and working together one and all, till he becomes an Angel upon earth, instead of a rebel and an outcast. He died to bestow upon him that privilege which implies or involves all others, and brings him into nearest resemblance to Himself, the privilege of Intercession. This, I say, is the Christian's especial prerogative; and if he does not exercise it, certainly he has not risen to the conception of his real place among created beings. Say not he is a son of Adam, and has to undergo a future judgment; I know it; but he is something besides. How far he is advanced into that higher state of being, how far he still languishes in his first condition, is, in the case of individuals, a secret with God. Still every Christian is in a certain sense both in the one and in the other: viewed in himself he ever prays for pardon, and confesses sin; but viewed in Christ, he "has access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoices in the hope of the glory of God."† Viewed in his place in "the Church of the First-born enrolled in heaven," with his original debt cancelled in Baptism, and all subsequent penalties put aside by Absolution, standing in God's presence upright and irreprovable, accepted in the Beloved, clad in the garments of righteousness, anointed with oil, and with a crown upon his head, in royal and priestly garb, as an heir of eternity, full of grace and good works, as walking in all the

* Ex. xi. 12. Jer. xxxv. 18, 19. Dan. x. 2—14. Mark ix. 29.

† Rom. v. 2

commandments of the Lord blameless, such an one, I repeat it, is plainly in his fitting place, when he intercedes. He is made after the pattern and in the fulness of Christ,—he is what Christ is. Christ intercedes above, and he intercedes below. Why should he linger in the doorway, praying for pardon, who has been allowed to share in the grace of the Lord's passion, to die with Him and rise again? He is already in a capacity for higher things. His prayer thenceforth takes a higher range, and contemplates not himself merely, but others also. He is taken into the confidence and counsels of His Lord and Saviour. He reads in Scripture what the many cannot see there, the course of His providence, and the rules of His government in this world. He views the events of history with a divinely enlightened eye. He sees that a great contest is going on among us between good and evil. He recognizes in statesmen, and warriors, and kings, and people, in revolutions and changes, in trouble and prosperity, not merely casual matters, but instruments and tokens of heaven and of hell. Thus he is in some sense a prophet; not a servant, who obeys without knowing his Lord's plans and purposes, but even a confidential "familiar friend" of the Only-begotten Son of God, calm, collected, prepared, resolved, serene, amid this restless and unhappy world. O mystery of blessedness, too great to think of steadily, lest we grow dizzy! Well is it for those who are so gifted, that they do not for certain know their privilege; well is it for them that they can but timidly guess at it, or rather, I should say, are used, as well as bound, to contemplate it as external to themselves lodged in the Church of which they are but members, and the gift of all saints in every time and place, without curiously inquiring whether it is theirs peculiarly above others, or doing more than availing themselves of it as any how a trust committed to them (with whatever success) to use. Well is it for them; for what mortal heart could bear to know that it is brought so near to God Incarnate, as to be one of those who are perfecting holiness and stand on the very steps of the throne of Christ?

To conclude. If any one asks, "How am I to know whether I am advanced enough in holiness to intercede?" he has plainly mistaken the doctrine under consideration. The privilege of Intercession is a trust committed to all Christians who have a clear conscience and are in full communion with the Church. We leave secret things to God,—what each man's real advancement is in holy things, and what his real power in the unseen world. Two things alone concern us, to exercise our gift and make ourselves more and more worthy of it. The slothful and unprofitable servant hid his Lord's talent in a napkin. This sin be far from us as regards one of the greatest of our gifts! By words and works we can but teach or influence a few; by our prayers we may benefit

the whole world, and every individual of it, high and low, friend, stranger, and enemy. Is it not fearful then to look back on our past lives even in this once respect? How can we tell but that our king, our country, our Church, our institutions, and our own respective circles, would be in far happier circumstances than they are, had we been in the practice of more earnest and serious prayer for them? How can we complain of difficulties, national or personal, how can we justly blame and denounce evil-minded and powerful men, if we have but lightly used the intercessions offered up in the Litany, the Psalms, and in the Holy Communion? How can we answer to ourselves for the souls who have, in our time, lived and died in sin; the souls that have been lost and are now waiting for judgment, the infidel, the blasphemer, the profligate, the covetous, the extortioner; or those again who have died with but doubtful signs of faith, the death-bed penitent, the worldly, the double-minded, the ambitious, the unruly, the trifling, the self-willed, seeing that, for what we know, we were ordained to influence or reverse their present destiny and have not done it?

Secondly and lastly, If so much depend on us, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" O that we may henceforth be more diligent than heretofore, in keeping the mirror of our hearts unsullied and bright, so as to reflect the image of the Son of God in the Father's presence, clean from the dust and stains of this world, from envies and jealousies, strife and debate, bitterness and harshness, indolence and impurity, care and discontent, deceit and meanness, arrogance and boasting! O that we may labour, not in our own strength but in the power of God the Holy Spirit, to be sober, chaste, temperate, meek, affectionate, good, faithful, firm, humble, patient, cheerful, resigned, under all circumstances, at all times, among all people, amid all trials and sorrows of this mortal life! May God grant us the power, according to His promise, through His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ!

SERMON XXV.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

REVELATION vi. 11.

And white robes were given unto every one of them ; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

IN taking these words as a text, I do not profess to give you any sufficient explanation of them. Doubtless in their full meaning they are too deep for mortal man ; yet they are written for our reverent contemplation at least, and perchance may yield something, under God's blessing, even though the true and entire sense of them was lost to the Church with him who wrote them. He was admitted into the heaven of heavens, while yet in the flesh, as St. Paul before him. He saw the throne and Him who sat on it ; and his words, as those of the prophets under the Law, are rather spontaneous accompaniments on what he saw, than definite and complete descriptions addressed to us. They were provided, indeed, and directed according to our need, by an overruling inspiration ; but the same sacred influence also limited their range, and determined under what aspect and circumstances they should delineate the awful realities of heaven. Thus they are but shadows cast, or at best, lines or portions caught from what is unseen, and they attend upon it after the manner of the Seraphim, with wings covering their face, and wings covering their feet, in adoration and in mystery.

Now as to the text itself, it speaks of the Martyrs in their disembodied state, between death and judgment ; according to the foregoing verse, "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." It describes them in a state of rest ; still they cry out for some relief, for vengeance upon their persecutors. They are told to wait awhile, "to rest yet for a little season," till the circle of Martyrs is completed. Meantime they receive some present earnest of the promise, by way of alleviation ; "white robes were given unto every one of them."

Some men will say that this is all figurative, and means merely that the blood of the Martyrs, crying now for vengeance, will be required on their murderers at the last day. I cannot persuade myself thus to dismiss so solemn a passage. It seems a presumption to say of dim notices about the unseen world, "they only mean this or that," as if one had ascended into the third heaven, or had stood before the throne of God. No; I see herein a deep mystery, a hidden truth, which I cannot handle or define, shining "as jewels at the bottom of the great deep,"* darkly and tremulously, yet really there. And for this very reason, while it is neither pious nor thankful to explain away the words which convey it, while it is a duty to use them, not less a duty is it to use them humbly, diffidently, and teachably, with the thought of God before us, and of our own nothingness.

Under these feelings I shall now attempt to comment upon the text, and with reference to the Intermediate State of which it seems plainly to speak. But it will be best rather to use it as sanctioning and connecting our anticipations of that State, as drawn from more obvious passages of Scripture, than to venture to infer anything from it in the first instance. Also, though it directly speaks of the Martyrs, it may be profitably applied to the case of all Saints whatever; for, the Martyrs being types and first fruits of all, what is true to them, is perchance in some sense true also of their brethren; and if it be true of any at least all antecedent objections vanish, against its being true of all, which are the chief arguments we shall have to contend with. Now let us proceed to the consideration proposed.

St. John says:—"I saw under the Altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

1. Now first in this passage we are told that the Saints are *at rest*. "White robes were given unto every one of them." "It was said unto them that they should *rest* yet for a little season." This is expressed still more strongly in a later passage of the same book: "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth*. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they *may rest from their labours*." Again, St. Paul had a desire "to depart and to *be with Christ*, which (he adds) is far better." And

* Davison on Sacrifice.

our Lord told the penitent robber, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in *paradise*." And in the parable He represents Lazarus as being "*in Abraham's bosom*;" a place of rest surely, if words can describe one.

If we had no other notice of the dead than the foregoing, it would appear quite sufficient for our need. The great and anxious question that meets us, is, what is to become of us after this life. We fear for ourselves, we are solicitous about our friends just on this point. They have vanished from us with all their amiable and endearing qualities, all their virtues, all their active powers. Where is that spirit gone, over the wide universe, up or down, which once thought, felt, loved, hoped, planned, acted in our sight, and which wherever it goes, must carry with it the same affections and principles, desires and aims? We know how it thought, felt, and behaved itself on earth; we know that beloved mind, and it knows us, with a mutual consciousness;—and now it is taken from us, what are its fortunes?—This is the question which perplexed the heathen of old time. It is fearful to be exposed in this world to ills we know of,—the fury of the elements and the darkness of night, should we be left houseless and shelterless. But when we think how utterly ignorant we are both of the soul's nature and of the invisible world, the idea of losing friends, or departing ourselves into such gloom, is, to those who get themselves to think about it, very overpowering. Now, here Scripture meets our need, in the texts already cited. It is enough, surely, to be in Abraham's bosom, in our Saviour's presence; it is enough, after the pain and turmoil of this world, to be at rest.

Moreover, texts such as these do more than satisfy the doubts which beset the heathen; they are useful to us at the present day, in the perplexity which may easily befall us. A great part of the Christian world, as is well known, believes that after this life the souls of Christians ordinarily go into a prison called Purgatory, where they are kept in fire or other torment, till, their sins being burned away, they are at length fitted for that glorious kingdom into which nothing defiled can enter. Now if there were any good reason for this belief, we should certainly have a very sad and depressing prospect before us;—watch and pray, and struggle as we might, yet after all to have to pass from the sorrows of this life, from its weariness and its pains, into a second and a worse trial! Not that we should have any reason to complain: for our sins deserve an eternal punishment, were God severe. Still it would be a very afflicting thought, especially as regarded our deceased friends, who (if the doctrine were true) would now, at this very moment, be in a state of suffering. I do not say that to many a sinner, it would not be an infinitely less evil to suffer for a

time in Purgatory, than to be cast into hell for ever; but those whom we have loved best, and revered most, are not of this number; and before going on to examine the grounds of it, every one must admit it to be a very frightful notion at least, that *they* should be kept from their rest, and confined in a prison beneath the earth. Nay, though the Bible did not positively affirm it, yet if it did not contradict it, and if the opinion itself was very general in the Church (as it is,) and primitive too (as it is not,) there would be enough in it reasonably to alarm us; for who could tell in such a case, but probably it might be true? This is what might have been; but in fact, Christ has mercifully interfered, expressly to assure us that our friends are better provided for, than this doctrine would make it appear. He assures that they "*rest* from their labours, and their works do follow them;" and we gather from the text, that even that loneliness and gloom which, left to themselves, they would necessarily feel, though ever so secure from actual punishment, may in truth, be mercifully compensated. The sorrowful state is there described, in which they would find themselves when severed from the body, and waiting for the promised glory at Christ's coming, and they are represented as sustained under it, soothed, quieted, consoled. As a parent would hush a child's restlessness, cherishing it in her arms, and lulling it to sleep, or diverting it from the pain or the fright which agitates it, so the season of delay, before Christ comes in judgment, tedious in itself, and solitary, is compensated to the spirits of the just by a present gift in earnest of the future joy. "How long, O Lord, holy and true." Such is their complaint. "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season," till the end.

2. Next, in this description is implied, what I have in fact already deduced from it, that departed Saints, though at rest, have not yet received their actual reward. "Their works do follow with them," not yet given in to their Saviour, and Judge. They are in an incomplete state in every way, and will be so till the day of judgment, which will introduce them to the joy of their Lord.

They are incomplete, inasmuch as their bodies are in the dust of the earth, and they wait for the Resurrection.

They are incomplete, as being neither awake nor asleep; I mean, they are in a state of rest, not in the full employment of their powers. The Angels are serving God actively; they are ministers between heaven and earth. And the Saints, too, one day shall judge the world, —they shall judge the fallen Angels; but at present, till the end comes, they are at rest only, which is enough for their peace, enough for our

comfort on thinking of them,—still, incomplete, compared with what one day shall be.

Further, there is an incompleteness also as regards their place of rest. They are “under the Altar.” Not in the full presence of God, seeing His face, and rejoicing in His works, but in a safe and holy treasure-house close by, “in a cleft of the rock,” as Moses was, covered by the hand of God, and beholding the skirts of His glory. So again, when Lazarus died, he was carried to Abraham’s bosom ;—which, however honoured and peaceful an abode, was a place short of heaven. This is elsewhere expressed by the use of the word “paradise,” or the garden of Eden ; which, again, though pure and peaceful, visited by Angels and by God himself, was not heaven. No emblem could express more vividly the refreshment and sweetness of that blessed rest, than to call it the garden in which the first man was placed ;—to which must be added St. Paul’s account of it, that he heard in it (when he was caught up thither) “unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”* Doubtless, it is full of excellent visions and wonderful revelations. God there manifests Himself, not as on earth dimly, and by material instruments, but by those more intimate approaches which spirit admits of, and our present faculties cannot comprehend. And in some unknown way, that place of rest has a communication with this world, so that disembodied souls know what is going on below. The Martyrs, in the passage before us, cry out, “How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?” They saw what was going on in the Church, and needed comfort from the sight of the triumph of evil. And they obtained white robes and a message of peace. Still, whatever be their knowledge, whatever their happiness, they have but lost their tabernacle of corruption, and are “unclothed,” and wait to be “clothed upon,” having put off “mortality,” but not yet being absorbed in “life.”†

There is another word used in Scripture to express the abode of just men made perfect, which gives us the same meaning. Our Lord is said in the Creed to have “descended into *hell*,” which word has a very different sense there from that which it commonly bears. Our Saviour, as we suppose, did not go to the abyss assigned to the fallen Angels, but to those mysterious mansions where the souls of all men await the judgment. That He went to the abode of blessed spirits, is evident, from His words addressed to the robber on the cross, when He also called it paradise ; that He went to some other place besides paradise, may be conjectured from St. Peter’s saying, He “went and preached to the spirits in prison, who had once been dis-

* 2 Cor. xii. 4.

† 2 Cor. v. 4.

obedient.”* The circumstance then that these two abodes of disembodied good and bad, are called by one name, Hades, or (as we happen to express it) hell, seems clearly to show that paradise is not the same as Heaven, but a resting-place at the foot of it. Let it be further remarked, that Samuel, when brought from the dead, in the witch’s cavern, said, ‘Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?’ words which would seem quite inconsistent with his being then already in Heaven.

Once more, the Intermediate State is incomplete as regards the happiness of the Saints. Before our Lord came, it may be supposed even to have admitted at times of a measure of disquiet, and that in the case of the greatest Saints themselves, though most surely still they were altogether “in God’s hand;” for Samuel says, “Why hast thou *disquieted* me, to bring me up?” Perchance our Lord reversed this imperfection at his coming, and took with Him, even in their bodies, to heaven itself, some principal Saints of the Old Covenant; according to St. Matthew’s intimation. But even now, as it would appear from the text, the Blessed, in their disembodied state, admit of an increase of happiness, and receive it. “They cried out” in complaint—and “white robes were given them;” they were soothed, and bid wait awhile.

Nor would it be surprising, if in God’s gracious providence, the very purpose of their remaining thus for a season at a distance from heaven, were, that they may have time for growing in all holy things, and perfecting the inward development of the good seed sown in their hearts. The Psalmist speaks of the righteous as “trees planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth their fruit in due season;” and when might this silent growth of holiness more suitably and happily take place, than when they are waiting for the Day of the Lord, removed from those trials and temptations which were necessary for its early beginnings? Consider how many men are very dark and feeble in their religious state, when they depart hence, though true servants of God as far as they go. Alas! I know that the multitude of men do not think of religion at all;—they are thoughtless in their youth, and secular as life goes on;—they find their interest lie in adopting a decent profession; they deceive themselves, and think themselves religious, and (to all appearance) die with no deeper religion than such a profession implies. Alas! there are many also, who, after careless lives, amend, yet not truly;—think they repent, but do not in a Christian way. There are a number too, who leave repentance for their death-bed, and die with no fruits of religion at all, except with so much of subdued and serious

* 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

† 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

feeling as pain forces upon them. All these, as far as we are told, die without hope. But, after all these melancholy cases are allowed for, many there are still, who, beginning well, and persevering for years, yet are even to the end but beginners after all, when death comes upon them ;—many who have been in circumstances of especial difficulty, who have had fiercer temptations, more perplexing trials than the rest, and in consequence have been impeded in their course. Nay, in one sense, all Christians die with their work unfinished. Let them have chastened themselves all their lives long, and lived in faith and obedience, yet still there is much in them unsubdued,—much pride, much ignorance, much unrepented, unknown sin, much inconsistency, much irregularity in prayer, much lightness and frivolity of thought. Who can tell then, but, in God's mercy, the time of waiting between death and Christ's coming, may be profitable to those who have been His true servants here, as a time of maturing that fruit of grace, but partly formed in them in this life,—a school-time of contemplation, as this world is a discipline of active service? Such, surely, is the force of the Apostle's words, that "He that hath begun a good work in us, will perform it *until* the day of Jesus Christ," *until* not *at*, not stopping it with death, but carrying it on to the Resurrection. And this, which will be accorded to all Saints, will be profitable to each in proportion to the degree of holiness in which he dies; for, as we are expressly told, that in one sense the spirits of the just are *perfected* on their death, it follows that the greater advance each has made here, the higher will be the line of his subsequent growth between death and the Resurrection.

And all this accounts for what else may surprise us,—the especial stress the Apostles lay on the coming of Christ, as the object to which our hope must be directed. We are used in this day to look upon death as the point of victory and triumph for the Saints ;—we leave the thought of them when life is over, as if then there was nothing more to be anxious about; nor in one sense is there. Then they are secure from trial, from falling; as they die, so they remain. Still, it will be found, on the whole, that death is not *the* object put forward in Scripture for hope to rest upon, but the *coming of Christ*, as if the interval between death and His coming was by no means to be omitted in the process of our preparation for heaven. Now, if the sacred writers uniformly hold out Christ's coming, but we consider death as the close of all things, is it not plain that, in spite of our apparent agreement with them in formal statements of doctrine, there must be some hidden and undetected difference between them and ourselves, some unfounded notion on our part which we have inherited, some

assumed premiss, some lurking prejudice, some earthly temper, or some mere human principle? For instance, St. Paul speaks of the Corinthians as "*waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" To the Philippians he says, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we *look out for the Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body." In his first epistle to the Thessalonians, he seems to make this waiting for the Last day almost part of his definition of a true Christian; "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for His Son from heaven.*" In his epistle to Titus, "*Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*" To the Hebrews, "Unto them that *look for Him*, shall Christ appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Again, "*Ye have need of patience*, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might *receive the promise.* For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry." And to the Romans, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," *i. e.* at the Resurrection; "for the earnest expectation of the creature *waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.* . . . We ourselves groan within ourselves, *waiting for the adoption*, to wit, the redemption of our body;" and presently he adds, evidently speaking of things belonging to the unseen world, and (as we may suppose) the Intermediate State inclusively, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor *things to come*, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Again, "He that raised up the Lord Jesus. shall *raise up us also by Jesus*, and shall present us with you. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. . . . *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God*, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Now, how parallel is this waiting for Christ's coming, as inculcated in the foregoing passages to the actual conduct of the Saints as recorded in the passage of which the text forms part! "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.* And white robes were given unto every one of them, *until* their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled:"—and with our Saviour's words in the Gospel, "Shall not God *avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him*, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, *when the Son of man cometh*," (Christ's

coming then is the “avenging” for which they cry,) “when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?”*

This, indeed, is our Saviour’s usual doctrine, as well as His Apostles’. I mean, it is His custom to insist on two events chiefly—His first coming and his second—our regeneration and our resurrection,—throwing into the back ground the prospect of our death, as if it were but a line of distinction, (however momentous a one,) not of division, in the extended course of our purification. For example: “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live;”—the dead in sin: here, then, our regeneration is set forth. Then He proceeds: “The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Here is mentioned His second coming, with its attendant events. Again: “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I *will come again* and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And in the parable of the talents: “A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return; and he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.”† Here is mention of Christ’s first and His second coming. It is not uncommon indeed to say, that “till I come” means “till every man’s death,” when in a certain sense Christ comes to him: but surely this is a mere human assumption; the time of judgment, and not before, is the time when Christ calls His servants and takes account.

Lastly, it is the manner of Scripture to imply that all Saints make up but one body, Christ being the Head, and no real distinction existing between dead and living; as if the Church’s territory were a vast field, only with a veil stretched across it, hiding part from us. This at least, I think, will be the impression left on the mind after a careful study of the inspired writers. St. Paul says, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the *whole* family in heaven and earth is named,” where “heaven” would seem to include paradise. Presently he declares that there is but “one body,” not two, as there is but one Spirit. In another Epistle he speaks of Christians in the flesh being “come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and the spirits of just

* 1 Cor. i. 7. Phil. iii. 20, 21. 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. Tit. ii. 13. Heb. ix. 28; x. 36, 37. Rom. viii. 18—39. 2 Cor. iv. 14—17; v. 1. Luke xviii. 7, 8.

† John v. 25—29; xiv. 2, 3. Luke xix. 12, 13.

men made perfect.”* Agreeably to this doctrine, the collect for All Saints’ day teaches us that “Almighty God has knit together his elect,” (that is, both living and dead,) “in *one* communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son.”

This then, on the whole, we may humbly believe to be the condition of the Saints before the Resurrection, a state of repose, rest, security ; but again a state more like paradise than heaven,—that is, a state which comes short of the glory which shall be revealed in us after the Resurrection, a state of waiting, meditation, hope, in which what has been sown on earth may be matured and completed.

I will make one remark before concluding, by way of applying what has been said to ourselves. There have been times, we know, when men thought too much of the dead. That is not the fault of this age. We now go into the opposite extreme. Our fault surely is, to think of them too little. It is a miserable thing to confess, yet surely so it is, that when a friend or relative is dead, he is commonly dismissed from the mind very shortly, as though he was not ; there is no more talk of him, or reference to him, and the world goes on without him as if he had never been. Now, of course the deepest feelings are those which are silent ; so I do not mean to say that friends are not thought of, because they are not talked of. How could it be ? Can any form of society or any human doctrine fetter down our hearts, and make us think and remember as it will ? Can the tyranny of earth hinder our holding a blessed and ever-enduring fellowship with those who are dead, by consulting their wishes, and dwelling upon their image, and trying to imitate them, and imagining their peaceful state, and sympathizing in their “loud cry,” and hoping to meet them hereafter ? No, truly ! we have a more glorious liberty than man can take from us, with all the sophistries of selfishness, and subtleties of the schools ! I do not speak of the tender-hearted, affectionate, and thoughtful. They cannot forget the departed, whose presence they once enjoyed, and who, (in Scripture language,) though “absent in the body, are present with them in spirit,” “joying and beholding their order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ.”† But I speak of the many, the rude, cold, and scornful, the worldly-minded, the gay, and the careless ; whose ordinary way it is, when a friend is removed, to put aside the thought of him, and blot it out from their memories.

Let me explain what I mean by an instance, which is not uncommon. We will say, a parent or relative dies and leaves a man a property :—he comes into it gladly ; buries the dead splendidly ; and then thinking

* Eph. iii. 14, 15 ; iv. 4. Heb. 22, 23.

† 1 Cor. v. 3. Col. ii. 5.

he has done all, he wipes out what is past, and enters upon the enjoyment of his benefaction. He is not profuse or profligate, proud or penurious, but he thinks and acts in all respects as if he, to whom he is indebted, were annihilated from God's creation. He has no obligations. He was dependent before, but now he is independent; he is his own master; he ceases to be in the number of "little children." Like the Corinthians, "now he is full, now he is rich, he reigns as a king without" those to whom he once was forced to submit. He is the head of (what is called) an establishment. If he ever speaks of the dead, it is in a way half kind, half contemptuous, as of those who are helpless and useless, as he would speak of men still living who were in dotage or in mental incapacity. You hear, even the most good-hearted and kindly (such is the force of bad example) speak in this disrespectful way of old people they knew in their youth, not meaning anything by it, but still, doubtless, cherishing in themselves thereby a very subtle kind of hardness, selfishness, superciliousness, self-gratulation. Men little think what an effect all this has on their general character. It teaches them to limit their belief to what they see. They give up a most gracious means divinely provided for their entering into "that which is within the veil," and seeing beyond the grave;—and they learn to be contented in uniting themselves with things visible,—in connections and alliances which come to nought. Moreover, this same error casts them upon the present instead of the past. They lose their reverence for antiquity;—they change the plans and works of their predecessors without scruple; they enjoy the benefactions of past ages without thankfulness, as if, by a sort of right; they worship in churches for which "other men laboured" without thinking of them; they forget they have but a life-interest in what they possess, that they have received it in trust, and must transmit as they have received.

On the other hand, while the thought of the dead is thus a restraint upon us, it is also a great consolation, especially in this age of the world, when the Universal Church has fallen into errors and is divided branch against branch. What shall sustain our faith (under God's grace) when we try to adhere to the Ancient Truth and seem solitary? What shall nerve the "watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem," against the scorn and jealousy of the world, the charge of singularity, of fancifulness, of extravagance, of rashness? What shall keep us calm and peaceful within, when accused of "troubling Israel," and "prophesying evil?" What but the vision of all Saints of all ages, whose steps we follow? What but the image of Christ mystical stamped upon our hearts and memories? The early times of purity and truth have not passed away! they are present still! We are not solitary, though we seem so. Few

now alive may understand or sanction us ; but those multitudes in the primitive time, who believed, and taught, and worshipped, as we do, still live unto God, and, in their past deeds and their present voices, cry from the Altar. They animate us by their example ; they cheer us by their company ; they are on our right hand and our left, Martyrs, Confessors, and the like, high and low, who used the same Creeds, and celebrated the same Mysteries, and preached the same Gospel as we do. And to them were joined, as ages went on, even in fallen times, nay, even now in times of division, fresh and fresh witnesses from the Church below. In the world of spirits there is no difference of parties. It is our plain duty indeed here, to contend even for the details of the Truth according to our light ; and surely there is a Truth in spite of the discordance of opinions. But that Truth is at length simply discerned by the spirits of the just ; human additions, human institutions, human enactments, enter not with them into the unseen state. They are put off with the flesh. Greece and Rome, England and France, give no colour to those souls which have been cleansed in the One Baptism, nourished by the One Body, and moulded upon the One Faith. Adversaries agree together directly they are dead, if they have lived and walked in the Holy Ghost. The harmonies combine and fill the temple, while discords and imperfections die away. Therefore is it good to throw ourselves into the unseen world, it is "good to be there," and to build tabernacles for those who speak "a pure language" and "serve the Lord with one consent ;" not indeed to draw them forth from their secure dwelling-places, not irreverently to address them, or wilfully to rely on them, lest they be a snare to us, but silently to contemplate them for our edification ; thereby encouraging our faith, enlivening our patience, sheltering us from thoughts about ourselves, keeping us from resting on ourselves and making us seem to ourselves (what really we ought ever to be) but followers of the doctrine of those who have gone before us, not teachers of novelties, not founders of schools.

God grant to us all, out of the superabundant treasures of His grace, such a spirit, the spirit of mingled teachableness and zeal, of calmness in inquiry and vigour in resolve, of power, and of love, and of a sound mind !

NOTES.

ON SERMON I.—P. 581.

THE view of Lot's character taken in this Sermon having been questioned in the British Magazine, a kind friend, under the signature of E. B. P., made the following remarks upon it, which are here, with the writer's leave reprinted.

"Mr. Newman selected the example of Lot; not with any thought of disparaging one whom God had pronounced a 'just' man, but to show wherein he fell short of a yet higher pattern, which is set forth to us of him whose children we are as long as we walk in the steps of his faith—the father of the faithful—faithful Abraham. The very value of the warning held out to us, in this respect, by the history of Lot, consists in this, that he was, indeed, a good and righteous man; but, being such, he continually lost opportunities of rising to a higher state, and so, finally, fell so very far short of the faith of Abraham, the 'friend of God.' The summary of Mr. N.'s view of the character of Lot is this,—that he, as well as Abraham, believed God, and obeyed him, when his commands were direct and express; that, even under the miserable circumstances under which he placed himself, he did not forfeit his integrity; he remained in Sodom, a worshipper of the one true God among infidels,—kind among the hard-hearted, pure among the brutish. And this, doubtless, was much; at least, if one contrasts the indifference with which even many respectable persons allow themselves to become inured to sin, which they witness frequently, with his feelings, who, 'in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.' Or again, if we compare his diligence in receiving strangers (so that he sat till eventide at the gate of Sodom, awaiting if any should pass by that way) with the indolence and sparing of personal pains which characterizes most of this day's charity, we shall see some of the value of his example. And these are the points for which he is praised in holy Scripture—his loathing sin, although in the midst of it; his being 'vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked,' although accustomed to it; and, again, his habitual self-denying care of strangers, whence 'he entertained angels unawares.' Lot's particular virtues stand out as a beacon to us, like the purity of Joseph, the energy of Samson, the wisdom of Solomon, the tranquil reflectiveness of Isaac, the self-denying unambitiousness of Gideon, the early piety and consequent evenness of character of Samuel, as so many several portions of the complete Christian character. The several graces were in a remarkable degree, far beyond what we should have expected, developed in God's servants under the old dispensation, many of whom thereby became in their several ways types of Him who was all

holiness, and are unitedly the patterns for us. We need not fear, then, disparaging this their excellence and appointed end, by adverting to other points wherein any of them seem to be pointed out as having come short. Lot's faithfulness among the faithless is a protest against sinful compliance with the world's maxims; his deliverance, a pledge that 'God knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation;' the reward of his hospitality, an encouragement to toilsome care of strangers; for so we, too, may entertain not angels only unawares, but may 'take' our Lord also 'in;' and yet, with all this, his example, like David's, may be in other respects a warning not to follow, but to avoid. We have but one perfect exemplar. Placed then under the same outward circumstances as Abraham, carried through his first trial by a ready acquiescence* in Abraham's parental guidance and commanding faith, he yet fell far short of him. No one would think of comparing Lot with the father of the faithful and the friend of God. Rather he seems in part to stand by him the more to illustrate Abraham's superior faith. Wherein, then, consisted the difference? In that, when the occasion was offered him, he preferred present ease, comfort, wealth,† and, although without direct sin, yet made them irrespectively of holiness, the objects of his choice. Though a stranger and a pilgrim, he sought a home; he entangled himself in the affairs of this life; and so, though 'saved as by fire' from the consequences of his choice, yet he 'suffered loss,' fell short of the 'exceeding great reward' of Abraham's single-hearted perseverance, remained altogether upon a lower level of attainment, and receives a far lower measure of the praise of God. From the time that he separates from Abraham, and chooses to dwell among the evil inhabitants of the plain, we hear of nothing but loss and disgrace—first, captivity; then loss of all for the sake whereof he had made this unhappy choice; every one immediately connected with him a dishonour; his sons-in-law perish as profane unbelievers; his wife a proverb and a monument of God's displeasure on unsteadfastness; his daughters named only as connected with shame, compassing the continuance of their race by dreadful, unholy means, and so receiving the reward of such self-wise ways in the parentage of a savage race, excluded from and persecutors of 'the congregation of the Lord;' himself though spared for the sake of another, yet a fugitive and a vagabond upon the earth, fleeing in alarm from the city which, in weakness of faith, he had

* Gen. xii. 4. "And Lot went with him." Verse 5. "And Abram took Lot." St. Chrys. ad loc. Hom. xxxi. § 5, ed. Ben. Perhaps because he was young, and he (Abram) was in the place of a father to him; and Lot also, through natural affection and gentleness of manners, could not readily tear himself from the just man; therefore he could not leave him.

This is clearly implied by Scripture as Lot's motive. "And Lot lift up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah,) even as the garden of the Lord. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan: nor is blame less implied in the strong notice of the exceeding sinfulness of Sodom, in this place, when it stands altogether detached from the account of their punishment. "And Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom; but the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." We may not look upon such juxta-position as without its meaning; the statement, as it stands here, obviously contains a reflection on Lot's conduct, and is disconnected from everything besides.

implored leave to stop short in, and not even thus returning in his poverty to Abraham's holy household, which for wealth he had left. Surely, it is not without evident warning, that all this accumulated misery is related to have over-spread his latter years; that disgrace, such as is not known even among the heathen, was allowed to attach to this servant of God, was stamped by his daughters upon the very name and front, upon their children and people; and yet we are not told of the repentance of their father: of him and Esau alone we hear not, while of Ishmael we hear, that 'he was gathered to his fathers.' They died, as their descendants lived, shut out from 'the congregation of the Lord.' It is again remarkable, that Scripture, which speaks of the office assigned to other holy men in an evil generation, (as to Noah, the preacher of righteousness,) assigns no office, no duties, to Lot in Sodom. His dwelling there was self-chosen, and so God (as far as it appears) employed him not; he came forth as he went in, not having gained one single soul by his renewed stay, but having in weakness of faith* offered to destruction two of his family; and his very wife, the only other member of it, being slain for the longing after the corrupted and guilty city—the city which her husband had chosen to dwell in. This is not what we should have expected, not perhaps what even Abraham expected, when he hoped that 'ten righteous' might be found in the city; and accordingly different inferences have been made from the sacred text, which might assign him some duties in Sodom; as, from the words† 'sat in the gate,' the Jews have inferred that he was a judge; and from his expostulation with the men of Sodom, he appears in the *Coran*‡ (again a Jewish notion) as a prophet. These expedients the more illustrate the mournful silence of holy Scripture.

"This view of Lot's character—as one, namely, who with particular excellences, yet for want of more unremitting, irrespective, noble perseverance, fell short of the high attainments to which he was called, and remained a sort of middle character, neither sinking altogether, nor yet rising to chief eminence among the saints of God—is that which we generally find among the fathers of the Christian church. The very etymology which is so constantly given by them to the name of Lot, 'declinans,'§ expresses this,—one who, having begun well, fell off. Again, we find it among them|| as a sort of proverb, (in

* St. Augustine remarks on Lot's saying, "I cannot escape to the mountain,"—"He did not believe the Lord himself, whom he recognised in the angels, through the distraction of his fear, whereby also he said what he did about the defilement of his daughters; whence also we may know that what he then said is not to be regarded as of authority, (as if we might do a less evil, lest another should do a greater,) inasmuch as this principle is not to be regarded as of authority, that we may mistrust God."—*Quæst. ad Gen. l. i. q. 44.* And again, c. *Mendacium ad Consentium*, § 21, he speaks of Lot's being "ready to do that which—not the cloudy atmosphere of human panic, but—the tranquil serenity of Divine law would, if it were consulted, cry aloud was not to be done."

† C. xix. l.

‡ *Jura* 29; and others.

§ St. Aug. in *Ps. lxxxii.* 8. St. Ambrose de Abraham, l. i. c. 3, l. ii. c. 6. St. Jerome inf. add. Philo. de migrat. Abrah. p. 410, ed. Hoeschel. In the *De Migr. Abraham.* p. 379, Philo scruples not to call him "unsteady, vacillating, halting hither and thither,"—*ἀβέβαιος, ἰταχυβέβαιος, ἀτακτοῦντες ὁδοὺς κινήσει.*

|| See below; some instances are also connected in Aloysius Lipponatus' *Uatena in Genesis*.

allusion to his words, Gen. xix. 19, 'I cannot escape to the mountain,') 'He who dwelt in the valley of Sodom, could not ascend up into the mountain ;'—i. e., 'he who had placed himself voluntarily in circumstances spiritually disadvantageous, cannot at once reach a high eminence in faith, or practice, or understanding.'

"This idea of mediocrity and want of faith is expressed by St. Augustine :*—'Scripture sets forth that Lot was freed *rather for the deserts of Abraham*, that it may be understood that Lot is called 'just' *relatively* (secundum quendam morem ;) principally because he worshipped the one true God, and in comparison to the guilt of the men of Sodom, among whom though he lived, yet he could not be led to a life like theirs ;' and on the words, 'Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain,'—'Probably the very mountain to which he now goes of his own accord was that whither at the Lord's command he would not go up. The Lord had granted to his weakness and fear a city, which Lot himself had chosen, and had promised him safety therein, because for his sake he would spare the city ; yet he was afraid to remain there also, so little strong was his faith.' Origen,† again, (in an application partly allegorical, wherein however he keeps close to the meaning of the Scripture facts,) marks both the benefits of his example and wherein he fell short.—'Hear this, ye who shut your doors against strangers, who shun a foreigner as a foeman, (hospitem velut hostem.) Lot was dwelling in Sodom. *We read not of any other good deeds of his.* Hospitality alone is mentioned. Lot was indeed hospitable, and escaped destruction, (as Scripture bears him witness,) having 'entertained angels.' Yet he was not so perfect as, immediately upon leaving Sodom, to ascend the mountain. For it belongs to the perfect to say, 'I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, whence my help shall come.' He, then, was neither such as to deserve to perish with the men of Sodom, nor yet so great as to be able to dwell with Abraham in the high places. For had he been such, Abraham would now have said to him, 'If thou goest to the right, I to the left ; or if thou to the left, I to the right ; *nor would the dwellings of Sodom have pleased him.* For he was a sort of middle character between those who are lost and the perfect.' And again, speaking of the consequences of his drunkenness,—'Drunkenness deceived him whom Sodom deceived not. Lot was deceived by artifice, not willingly. He stands, then, as it were in the midst between the sinners and the just ; *inasmuch as he was descended from the kindred of Abraham, yet had dwelt in Sodom.* For his very escape from Sodom (as Scripture implies) *rather belongs to the honour of Abraham, than to the merits of Lot.* For this it speaks, 'And it came to pass when God overthrew the cities of Sodom, the Lord remembered Abraham, and brought forth Lot.' And on Lot's first choice, he observes,‡

* Quæst. ad Gen. l. i. q. 45—47, t. 3, ed. Bened. In another place, St. Augustine's character of Lot singularly coincides with that of Mr. N. ; "Lot, just and hospitable in Sodom, and pure and free from all contaminations of its inhabitants," &c.—C. Faust. l. xxii. c. 41.

† Homil. 5. in Genes. § 1, 2, t. ii. pp. 73, 74, ed. De la Rue.

‡ Selecta in Gen. ib. p. 35.

—‘Although the choice had been given to Lot by the modesty of Abraham, we must observe, that he who chooses for himself benefits not by his choice, and he who gave up had what was left blest to him.’

“St. Ambrose,* in like manner, speaks of this choice as the critical point of the life of Lot :—As Abraham acted humbly, who offered the choice ; so Lot too arrogantly, in that he took it. Virtue humbles itself, iniquity exalts itself, and he ought to have committed himself to his elder, that so he might be safer. Lastly, *he knew not how to choose*. For first he lifted up his eyes, and beheld the country—*i. e.*, what should not be first in order, but last. For the goods of the soul stand first, then those of the body, then those things which come from without, such as the dwelling, &c. St. Ambrose † then strikingly conveys his meaning under an allusion to the signification of the word Jordan, (lit. ‘the descending.’) ‘Since Jordan is called the descent,’ he descends who deserted the intercourse of virtue, and chose what was fair, not what was real. Well, then, saith Scripture, ‘Lot (*i. e.*, declension,) chose for himself,’ for God hath set before us good and evil, that each may choose what he will. Let us not choose, then, what appears to us the pleasanter, but what is, in truth, the more excellent ; lest, when a choice be given us, that we may follow what is best, we lift up our eyes, led aside by the false show of pleasantness, and obscure the truth of nature by the obliquity of our vision.’ And again, ‘Lot chose what was pleasant, which soon attracted the eyes of robbers. Hence, war among kings, victory of the enemies, captivity of the inhabitants. So then Lot paid the penalty for his weaker choice, his expectations being deceived, not through the unfruitfulness of the country, but through men’s envy of what is pleasant ; since, through the fault of a slavish listlessness, he had turned aside from that which was preferable, and had chosen the lot of the most abandoned. For Sodom is luxury and wantonness. Wherefore ‘Lot,’ is explained to mean ‘declension,’ for he who declines from virtue, and turns aside from equity, chooses what is vicious.’ St. Jerome takes the same view of this first error of Lot, and the comparative weakness of his faith. The first is a letter to Pammachius, ‡ who had recently built ‘a place to receive strangers’ (Xenodochium) in the port of Rome, which he calls ‘planting a twig from the tree of Abraham on the shore of Italy.’ St. Jerome is exhorting him to hold on ; ‘the chief of those who led a monastic life in the chief city following the *chief* patriarch [Abraham.] Let Lot, which is explained ‘declining,’ choose the plain, and, at the parting of life’s ways, § choose the easier, and that on the left hand. Do thou, with Sara, prepare thyself a monument in the rocky and difficult eminences.’ And again, || when he is extolling the character of Lot, ‘Lot also had hoped, with his daughters, to save his wife, and hurrying out of the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah, well nigh half

* De Abraham. l. ii. c. 6, § 33—35.

† Ib. l. i. c. 3, § 14.

‡ Ep. 66, (al. 26,) ed. Vallars.

§ Lit. “according to the letter of Pythagoras.”—*i. e.* Y.—which was regarded as the symbol of human life, one arm denoting the path of virtue, the other that of vice.—Vallars.

|| Ep. 122, ad Rusticum de Pœnitentia, (al. 46.)

consumed, to bring forth her who was held captive by her former views; but she, hesitating through despair, and looking back, is condemned by an eternal inscription of infidelity. And an earnest faith, in lieu of one woman who was lost, delivers a whole town, Zoar. Lastly, after that he, leaving the valleys and darkness of Sodom, ascended towards the mountains, the sun rose upon him in Zoar, which is, by interpretation, little; so that, *the little faith of Lot, because it could not save what was greater, might, at least, save the less.* For he who had been the inhabitant of Gomorrah and of error, could not at once reach that mid-day wherein Abraham, the friend of the Lord, together with the angels received the Lord.* St. Chrysostom again praises the hospitality* of Lot in glowing terms, yet blames † his choice in the same manner as the other fathers—‘The nephew, having experienced such courtesy, [from Abraham, in giving him his choice,] ought to have requitted the patriarch with like honour, and rather himself to have left the choice with him. For, somehow, we all, when we see others disputing and resisting us, and claiming the first place, are inclined not to allow ourselves to be worsted, or to give in to them; but when we see them giving way, and with humble words leaving the whole matter to us, we reverence their great moderation and give up our contention, and in turn yield the whole right, even though he who questioned it seem to be our inferior. Lot, then, whereas he ought so to have acted towards the patriarch, with the impetuosity ‡ of youth, and carried away by the desire of the best portion, sprung upon the first and best, as he deemed, and makes his choice. ‘And Lot,’ Scripture says, ‘lifting up his eyes,’ &c. God had, moreover, [in this separation,] a mysterious end, *that Lot should be warned by events that he had not rightly chosen*, and that the men of Sodom should become acquainted with the goodness of Lot, and that when the separation had been made, the promise which had been given to the patriarch should take effect. And on the scriptural mention of the wickedness of the men of Sodom in this place, verses 12, 13,) he remarks,—‘*Seest thou that Lot looked only to the nature of the soil, and regarded not the wickedness of the inhabitants?* For tell me, what avails fruitlessness of soil, when the inhabitants are depraved? or what harm is there in a desert, if the dwellers therein be good? For the righteousness of the inhabitants is the chief good. But Lot regarded one point only, the fruitfulness of the land. Wherefore Scripture, wishing to point out to us the wickedness of those who dwelt there, says, ‘But the men in Sodom were wicked, and sinners before God exceedingly.’ It says, ‘not wicked’ only, but ‘sinners’ also; and not ‘sinners’ simply, but ‘before God’ also; i. e., the intensity of their sins was very great, and their wickedness exceedingly; wherefore it adds, ‘before God exceedingly.’ Seest thou the greatness of the wickedness? Seest thou how great an evil it is to rush upon the chief portion, and not consider what is really advantageous? Seest thou how valua-

* Hom. 43, in Gen.—“That we may accurately know how the society of the patriarch led up this righteous man to the highest pitch of virtue; and, following in his footsteps, he also showed his especial hospitality by his deeds.” This praise evidently all belongs to the same subject—his hospitality.

† Hom. 33, in Gen. xiii. 4.

‡ *νεότης*.

ble a thing is modesty, and to retire from the chief things, and to take the worser? For, in the course of this teaching we shall see, that he who chose the chief things reaped no benefit; but he who took the lesser became daily more illustrious, and his abundance was every way increased, and he was set up as an object of admiration to all.* And subsequently,† on c. xiv. ver. 11, 12, 'See, what I said yesterday is now come to pass; for Lot reaped no benefit, from choosing the chief things, but was warned by the very events not to love them. For not only did no benefit accrue to him, but, see, he was carried away captive, and learnt, indeed, that it had been much better for him to enjoy the society of the just one, than being separated, and his freedom to be tried by such calamities. For, look, he was separated from the patriarch, and deemed himself more independent, and that he had obtained the chiefest lot, and was in much abundance; and, on a sudden, he turns a captive, homeless and heartless; that thou mayest learn how great an evil division is, how great a good is harmony; and that it is better not to seize on the greater portion, but rather to be content to suffer loss. 'They took,' Scripture saith, 'Lot and his goods.' How much better were it to dwell with the patriarch, and to endure anything rather than break that harmony, or, removing, and having chosen the chief part, fall straightway into so great troubles, and into the hands of the heathens.' Gregory the Great, lastly, (as St. Augustine above,) remarks,‡ that 'the excellence of Lot was, that among the bad he remained good. For it is no such great praise to be good among the good, but among the bad. For as it is a more grievous fault not to be good among the good, so it is an immense panegyric to have been good even among the bad. Hence, St. Peter praises Lot very highly, because he found him good among the reprobate.'

"Any one who, with Mr. Newman's sermons fresh in his memory, should read these passages of the fathers, would be struck (as I myself was) with the similarity of the teaching; how both point out the same parts of Lot's history, whether for praise or blame. Each insists that he was 'just, hospitable, a confessor of the truth among the wretched inhabitants of the cities in which he dwelt;' each blames his eagerness in appropriating to himself this world's goods, and the fathers more strongly than Mr. Newman. My object, however, in writing this, is not the defence of any one, but because the character of Lot thus viewed, is one which our age ought well to lay to heart. Our age is in all respects, one of mediocrity; its theory is moderate goodness, moderate attainments, moderate enjoyments of this world's pleasures, moderate luxury, moderate dissipation of mind, moderate departure from sound doctrine, moderate desire after heaven, moderate devotion to God, moderate accumulation of mammon, moderate serving it—in truth, an '*aurea mediocritas*.' The church and the world have shaken hands together, and the world has gained strength from the touch; and, as the stronger, has well-nigh brought the church on the boundary, which she shrinks from passing; yet have men on both sides allied themselves, and combined to tolerate all which is moderate, to proscribe only what leans on either side, to excess; the world professes itself ready to abandon the protection of its natural offspring—notorious, flagrant, offensive vice,—

* Hom. 35. s. 4.

† Lib. i. in Job c. i.

if the church will not set forth any higher standard than that of an easy, sleepy, costless virtue. The world professes itself ready to give up its protection of its wolf-cubs, if the sheep will but (as in the fable) part with their troublesome, but faithful guardians. If we will be honest with ourselves, we have been bent upon persuading the world that it may become or remain Christian upon easy terms; that Christianity was once, indeed, a hard service, and that it then required a severe discipline; but that these times are long since past, (will men venture to say that they will not return?) and that with them is gone the necessity of exercising ourselves in that laborious weighty armour,—that we may sit ‘each under our vine and our fig-tree,’ and take our rest. The world is what it was, or worse; and the church, as it must, has suffered by the compromise. We, too, are, as well as Lot, in great danger of forgetting, ‘our war-note,’ and our pilgrim staff, while we ‘lift up our eyes’ on the well-watered plain of Jordan, as the garden of the Lord,—well-watered everywhere, before the Lord overthrew it. We, too, are in danger of forgetting, ‘amid the listless joys of summer shades,’ that here is not our rest, nor our abiding-place—that we, too, seek a country; we make our pathway so flowery, that we are in peril of forgetting whither it leads—that ‘the flower fadeth, the grace of the fashion of it perisheth,’ and that the ‘word of the Lord [alone] abideth for ever.’ The problem which we seem to have proposed to ourselves, is, how to unite the greatest possible enjoyment, intellectual, sensible, social, with our Christian calling—to show that Christianity is perfectly compatible with the fullest earthly enjoyment; that proposed by our forefathers was, however, in the midst of this world’s duties, in everything to win the soul from earth, and fix it on heaven. We heap round ourselves comforts, in our food, our furniture, our sleep, our families, and perhaps from time to time give God thanks for these things, but for the most part take them as things of course; they habitually denied themselves therein, fasted from food, dwelt hardly, endured cold, broke their sleep, night by night, for prayer to God, and thanked God for their abridged ease more than we for our fullness. They chose the pilgrim-life of the father of the faithful; we, the portion of Lot, and the neighbourhood of Sodom. It will be something gained if we acknowledge this; if all are not tied down to this Procrustean bed of an even mediocrity of attainment or purpose; for conscience will not then sleep; when comfort is not made our principal aim or our idol, then will people abridge their comforts for Christ’s sake. This, however, is to all of us an immediate practical question; every one of us has had, from time to time, Lot’s choice before us, to take present ease and comfort, or to forego it; we, too, have been tempted to ‘lift up our eyes’ on the pleasant land, and we, too, heard our Father’s voice within us, calling us to higher things; and, in each single instance, to take up our cross and follow him. We have all of us had many such impulses.—many, ‘whether we would hear, or whether we would forbear,’—although their permanence and distinctness depended upon our previous obedience. Obey we these, each of them, little or great, and we shall be led further; Abraham was led step by step onwards, till he was brought to Mount Moriah, and was called to sacrifice ‘his own son, his only son, whom he loved,’ and, in that sacrifice, was privileged to see his Redeemer’s day, ‘and saw it, and was glad; if we choose to dwell near Sodom, we shall never,

indeed, be called to Abraham's trial, yet neither shall we have Abraham's reward ; it will be a mercy if we escape with Lot, much more if we escape Lot's disgrace and loss. For Lot had not a Christian's privileges or a Christian's covenanted might entrusted to him."

NOTE B.—ON SERMON XVI.—P. 581.

AFTER these Sermons on the Church and on Baptism were written, but before they were published, Dr. Pusey's Treatise appeared on the latter subject, and, in part anticipated, in part elucidated and completed, the doctrine contained in them. On the point under discussion in the passage to which this note is appended, he observes as follows :—

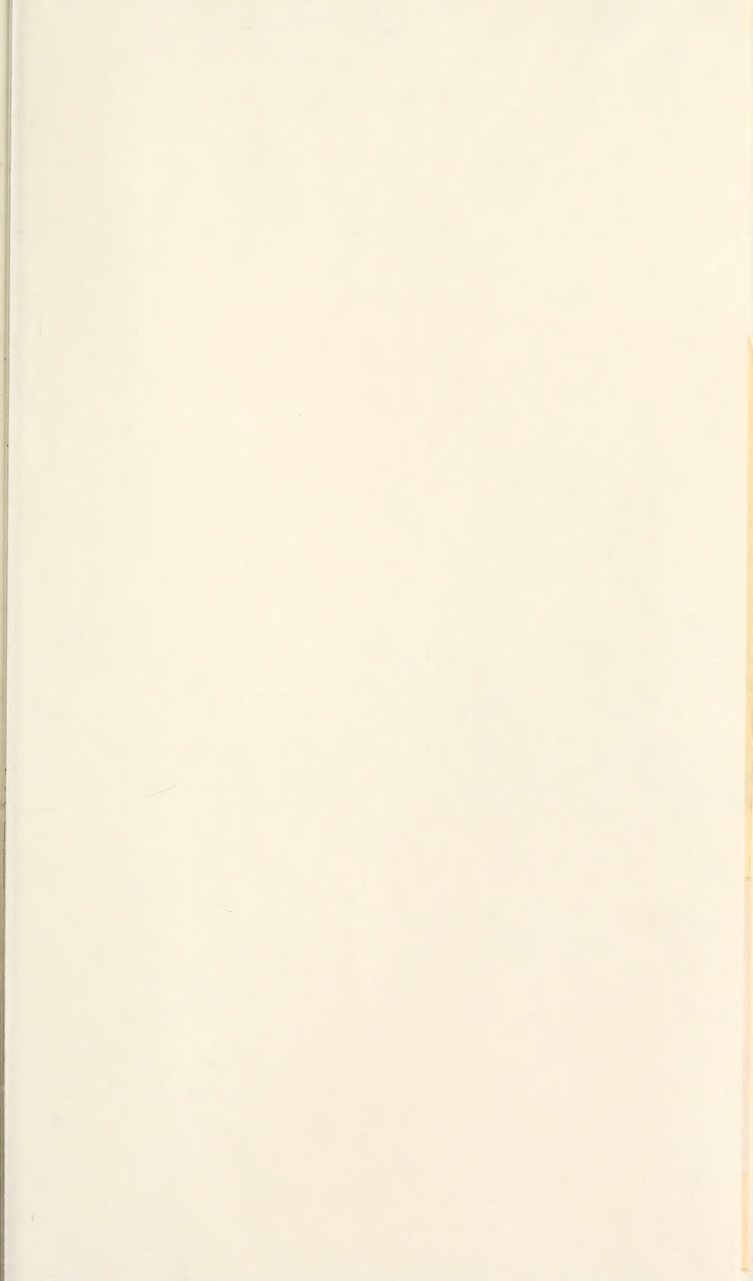
"It is an awful question, whether by receiving the Sacrament of Regeneration in unbelief, there being no other appointed means whereby the new birth is bestowed, such a one had not precluded himself for ever from being born again ? It is a case of such profane contempt of God's institutions, it betrays such a servitude to the god of this world, that such a case has not been provided for in Scripture ; and one should almost dread to speak where God in His word has been silent. For Simon Magus is no such case ; since of him Scripture positively affirms that he believed, however soon he fell away ; so that St. Peter's exhortation to him, to repent, holds out no encouragement to them who make a mock or a gain of God's institution. Where God gives repentance, we are safe in concluding that He is ready to pardon the offence, however in its own nature it may seem to put a person out of the covenant of grace and repentance, and at the same time to preclude his entering again into it ; and to any person who, having thus sinned, is concerned about his salvation, that very concern is a proof that God, in his case, has not withdrawn His Spirit. I speak not of particular cases, for God has, in a wonderful manner, for His own glory, made Baptism effectual, when administered in mockery by heathens on a heathen stage, to interest the curiosity of a profane audience and a Pagan Emperor ; but God has put forth His power to vindicate His own ordinances, by making the poor buffoon a convert, and enduing the convert of Baptism with strength for instant martyrdom. God can vindicate His ordinances, by making them all-powerful, either to save or to destroy. But when there is no such signal end to be attained, one would fear that they would be pernicious to the profane recipient. St. Augustine argues thus . . . 'The Church bore Simon Magus by Baptism, to whom, however, it was said, that he had no part in the inheritance of Christ. Was Baptism, was the Gospel, were the Sacraments, wanting to him ? But since love was wanting, he was born in vain, and perhaps it *had been better for him not to have been born.*' One portion, however, of the Ancient Church (the African) seems to have held decisively, not only that this sin of receiving Baptism unworthily would be forgiven upon repentance, but that it did not hinder repent-

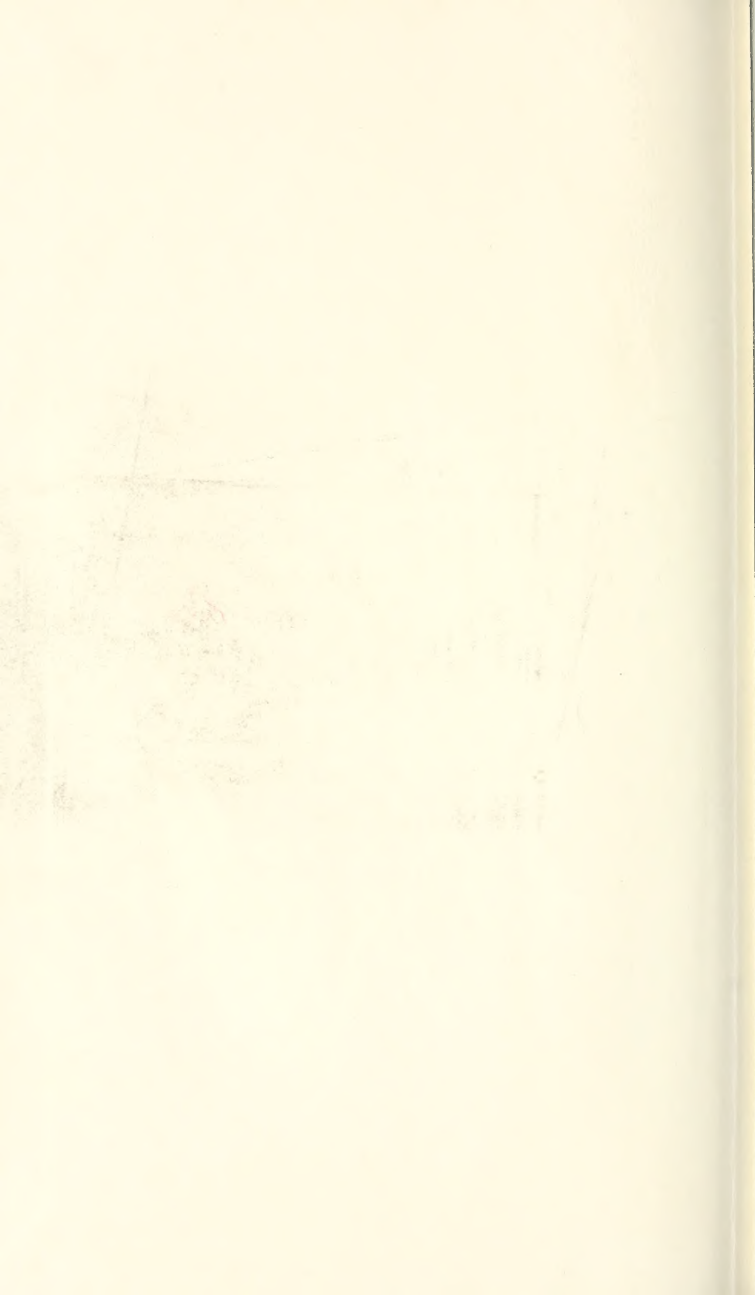
ance. St. Augustine uses this case as an argument against the Donatists, why the Church did not re-baptize those who sought to be restored to her out of a schismatic communion, although she held the baptism administered by that communion to be useless while men remained in it. 'If they say that sins are not forgiven to one who comes hypocritically to baptism, I ask, if he afterwards confess his hypocrisy with a contrite heart and true grief, is he to be baptized again? If it be most insane to affirm this, let them confess that a man may be baptized with the baptism of Christ, and yet his heart, persevering in malice and sacrilege, would not allow his sins to be done away: and thus let them understand that in communions separated from the Church men may be baptized (when the baptism of Christ is given and received, the Sacrament being administered in the same way;) which yet is then first of avail to the remission of sins, when the person being reconciled to the unity of the Church, is freed from the sacrilege of dissent, whereby his sins were retained, and not allowed to be forgiven. For, as he who had come hypocritically is not baptized again, but what without baptism could not be cleansed, is cleansed by that pious correction (of life) and true confession; so that what was before given, then begins to avail to salvation, when that hypocrisy is removed by a true confession; so also the enemy of the love and peace of Christ,' &c. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, on the other hand, speaks of the loss as absolutely irreparable. 'If thou feignest,' he addresses the Catechumen, 'now do men baptize thee, but the Spirit will not baptize thee. Thou art come to a great examination, and enlisting, in this single hour; which if thou lovest, the evil is irreparable, but if thou art thought worthy of the grace thy soul is enlightened.' It may be that St. Cyril may have meant, as is said also of all impairing of baptismal purity, that it cannot be wholly repaired, since there is no second baptism. The question is very awful, as what is not which concerns our souls? It may suffice to have said this much upon it, if by any means persons might see that subjects, of which they speak lightly, are indeed very fearful."—*Tracts for the Times* No. 69. pp. 171—176.











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